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Have You Got the Spirit? We are Rams or Generals. Pilots or Vikings. Timbers or Blazers. Athletes or actors. We are west-siders or east- siders. We are so many different individuals, and yet we are all Portlanders. There are as many different definitions and demonstrations of Portland's "Rose Spirit" as there are people in Portland and for me to stand here and explain all the incredible ways Portland oozes with spirit would take a while. So, to save time, I will just share some of my favorite definitions of spirit and how we as a city show it.

I have raised my voice in the spirit of competition with the Bleacher Bums at Central Catholic's "Pine Street Palace" during nail biting home games and with The Army at PGE Park as a Timber heads the game winning shot into the back of the net. I have participated in the spirit of giving through Central's community service and outreach programs both locally and abroad. Portland's spirit of Arts and Entertainment courses through my veins. From a very young age, through all my years at Central Catholic, to being an audience member at the Keller, the stage has been my second home.

Portland's Rose Spirit is a knowing spirit. You know you have Rose Spirit when you never use an umbrella, and the only reason you own one is to lend it to your out of town relatives or friends. "Rose Spirit" is when you kindly correct people who pronounce it OREYGON and COUCH STREET and THE WILL-AH-MET RIVER. You most likely have Rose Spirit when you crave the taste of Stumptown Coffee, Elephant Ears, or bizarre concoctions from Voodoo Doughnuts. Rose Spirit is when you think being called a Birkenstock wearing, granola eating, tree hugging hippie is a compliment. And most definitely you have a bad case of Rose Spirit-itus, if every second weekend in June you whip out the special Rose Festival chalk used to stake out your prime curb space on MLK.

Whether it is the competitive spirit, the giving spirit, the entertaining spirit, or the knowing spirit, the Spirit of Portland endures. I cannot tell you for certain what is in store for me next year, but I do know no matter how far away I go, no matter how different life may seem, I will always carry with me a little piece of Portland's Rose Spirit to have and to share.

The Rose Festival is an incredible opportunity for the whole city to celebrate community, tradition, and spirit. There are some who have a difficult time expressing themselves and showcasing their spirit. I would like to challenge everyone to reach out to those people and help them shine. When we build each other up, we build a stronger community and that spirit of community is what makes me so proud to be Portlander, and especially a Ram.

