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It was a cold November day, year 2006, when the massive aircraft Moldova – Oregon landed on the soil of the United States of America. The twelve-hour flight passed with few words exchanged among the three members of our small family. The feeling of being torn away from reality overcame the excitement for the surprises and experiences that future held for us.

As we walked down the immigration line at the airport of Portland, Oregon, I heard speech that sounded so beautiful, yet almost meaningless to me and my parents. I hungrily looked around trying to catch every word and make some sense out of it. As we came up to a group of men in solid blue uniforms, chills ran down my spine as I saw my father's lost face trying to understand what the men were asking of him. As the minutes slowly ticked away, my father was struggling under the simple questionnaire about his origin, what kind of food was brought, and what was the goal of the arrival. When the torture was over, I walked past the last security man, who behind my back said, "Why come America... stupid." The emotions were tearing my heart apart. The man in the uniform didn't know my father, didn't know about the thirteen years he spent saving people's lives as a surgeon, and certainly didn't know what it took him to give his family an opportunity to live a better life. The tears were falling down my cheeks, yet that experience certainly did not break my spirit. My young heart and mind were overwhelmed with the anticipation of encountering the new culture and tackling the mysterious language.

Since then, four years have passed. In order to learn the new ways, I have involved myself into numerous school activities as well as the community. I have spent hours reading books out loud to the children at Mill Park elementary school, simply for the enjoyment of communication with the little ones. About three years ago, I have also become a proud member of the Adventist Medical Center volunteering crew, and since then have worked an approximate amount of 400 hours. Volunteering at the hospital is one of the activities that I enjoy the most, this activity gives me an opportunity to give care to patients and be of use to a health care facility. Although many say that there is no reward in volunteering, I strongly believe that the smiles of the elderly residents are enough to make anyone realize how their help is valued.

The years spent in learning and making new connections have taught me to appreciate and respect the various cultures and the diversity that prevail in the United States of America. We are all a part of one whole; and the Rose Festival is an occasion that brings us together for the celebration of our union.

I have always been fascinated by the power of this somewhat magical event to bring thousands of Oregonians together to display the pride in their state and community during Rose Festival. As the month of February approaches and the talk of the Court is heard more often, the rose spirit arises in the walls of our school. Although many students

might not notice, the grand assembly for March 1st is already being planned for, some girls are in a hustle apply for Court, and all around there is a scent of unison and excitement.

Rose Festival is not only a tradition - it has become the messenger of spring and fresh starts. Seeing so many different personalities come together for one cause and in one spirit is a truly thrilling experience that motivated me to become a part of this festivity in the first place.