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The Rose. What is the spirit of the Rose? Its complex simplicity says so much, without saying much at all. It comes in many of colors red, yellow, white, pink, shedding delicate petals to dazzle eyes. A symbol of love, happiness, friendship, and joy. There, growing firm in its place, it shines for all to see and follow in example. The Rose is beautiful but painful when we attempt to grasp an understanding of its ways. Yet, we willingly endure that pain to share it and bring hope and happiness to others. Sometimes, its thorns press into our skin with such authority, such pain, such sorrow. Why, we ask? How can a Rose as beautiful as this, inflict so much pain? Sometimes we even feel like giving up. Yet, despite the pain, there is the unique miracle of every enduring Rose. Its scent, the perfume of life. The aroma of perseverance and hardship. Revealing the hidden truth, beneath that smile, beneath those eyes. Like the Rose, we all need a firm foundation to assure that we stay alive during the hard winters of our lives, when the Rose in each of us silently works to remain strong until we are revived and awaken again by the sun.

Like a rose, everyone in our community has something unique to express about themselves: their inner beauties along with their outer thorns, their strengths and their weaknesses. We are like the Rose gardens in our community, full of diverse colors, like the diverse nations represented in Portland, brought together by a common purpose: to make a world a more beautiful and better place. To gain an understanding of the world around us and to bring forth positive change to our society, our nation, and our world.

As you may all know, Portland is known for its rainy weather, and especially during the Rose Festival. However, the climate of Portland is ideal for growing Roses. An early Portland resident had a wonderful tradition to celebrate this flower that has made our city famous as the 'City of Roses'. Whenever she got together with her friends her only request was that they bring their Roses, for everyone to share and admire. With that in mind, I feel that everyone in our community is like a gardener. We come together to nurture and cultivate the skills of life-long learners, in order to blossom when we go forth into our community and the world beyond. Like that rose we are all both complex and simple. We are strong, yet we are fragile. We are uniquely individual, yet we can unite as a community and bring-forth positive change. We are the roses of Portland, the roses of Oregon, the roses that I would like to share with others as your Rose Festival princess.

Thank You.

