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Hello again, my name is Kristin Cubbison and I am a senior at Roosevelt High School.

When presented with the theme “Carnival of Roses”, the writer in me wanted to fill the page with carefully constructed metaphors, and imagery so vivid it would make Shakespeare swoon. However, as I crumpled three pages of my chicken-scratched attempts that were far from being worthy enough to utter in front of all of you (let alone Shakespeare, no offense) it dawned on me. I was only interpreting it on the surface, trying to describe its outer, tangible beauty while disregarding the theme’s meaning. After some research I learned that “carnival” alludes to the very beginnings of the Rose Festival, when the event was a Mardi Gras-style celebration. This is when I truly began to resonate with the theme “Carnival of Roses”.

In the summer of 2009, I spent a week helping rebuild New Orleans, Louisiana. The only thing more devastating than the neighborhoods ravaged by Hurricane Katrina, were the stories from the citizen’s who had once lived in them. However, no matter how desolate New Orleans sometimes felt, the feeling was quickly overshadowed by a trumpet playing proudly, or the swish of beads hanging from the Spanish moss trees. Mardi Gras was everywhere. Its essence sparkled through the boarded up windows and broken smiles. Most importantly, it is what brought and kept the community of New Orleans together, never allowing Hurricane Katrina to define them. That is what the Rose Festival does for the City of Portland. Every spring, each nook of the city buzzes with excitement as Portlanders plan how they will represent their city in one of the parades, or the dragon boat races, the air shows or the city fair. This spring, I would love to bestow that same excitement to represent my community of North Portland and

Roosevelt High School as their Rose Princess. As a passionate and avid defender of the Roughriders, my goal is to break down the stereotypes that seemingly define us. I want to show Portland that the Roughriders are not only academically successful, but community-minded. That we are rising, we are here, and we are strong. The opportunity to meet young women from all over the city will give me a truer understanding of their neighborhoods and of the stereotypes that weigh them down.

This year's Rose Festival celebrations will be bursting with a carnival of colorful, beautiful Portland roses. The mix of people and the merging of Portland citizens from every corner of the city is what the theme "Carnival of Roses" truly means to me. Despite the stereotypes that may boost our neighborhood's up, or break them down, we congregate and celebrate united by the love of our city (and our roses).