

Zoey Weesner – Cleveland

Inspiring. Tradition. Evolving. How do these three words describe the Rose Festival?

The history of Portland is woven with traditions still alive today. The weekly Saturday Market, the Naked Bike Ride, the Trail Blazers always seemingly falling just one game short. However, there is no bigger or grander tradition enjoyed by the people of Portland than the Rose Festival. From the thrills of the rides at City Faire, to the smell of the roses at the test garden, to waking up oh so early (or even camping all night) for a front row seat at the Grand Floral Parade, the traditions of the Rose Festival are woven into the colorful fabric that surrounds the city for three amazing weeks in late spring.

When The Portland Rose Society was established in 1888 their vision was, “that the glory of the rose would be perpetuated through the years by Portlanders for Portland.” They would be amazed to see just how beloved this symbol has become in our City of Roses. The ever growing array of colors of the rose are echoed in our city streets as our citizens reflect every color of the rainbow. The beauty of a newly opened rose is mirrored in the generosity of our city’s residents who welcome those new to our city with open arms. The city of Portland, and those of lucky enough to call it home, are allowed to revel in our own individual uniqueness and beauty just as each year we get to look forward to celebrating a festival which highlights the best parts of the city. Just as Portland was once small so was the Rose Festival. Together they have grown and evolved and today are both shining examples to others of beauty, welcomeness, and fun.

The Rose Festival has become ingrained in what makes Portland Portland. From inspiring a lifelong Portlander to save milk cartons all year in order to fashion a boat that will hopefully float, to inspiring a newly transplanted out-of-stater into dragging a lawn chair downtown and sitting for hours to watch the magical lights of the Starlight Parade, to encouraging a quiet high schooler to step outside her comfort zone in hopes of representing her school as a Princess, the Rose Festival highlights what makes Portland great. It’s people. While each person can claim different parts of the Rose Festival as their own all Portlanders can revel in that while things may change and over time the Rose Festival may look different, it has been, and always will be, the heart of our great city—the City of Roses.