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

The Rose Festival is many things. Inspiring, tradition, and evolving all truly describe the Festival and its experience.

Inspiring. When I was a little girl, I loved princesses more than anything. There are so many pictures of tiny me, grinning wildly and decked out in all sorts of princess gear. The dress, the tiara, the shoes, you name it. I was in love with the idea of being a princess. If I had known about these real-life princesses in the Rose Festival, my tiny mind would have been blown. There are princesses who study math and science, who volunteer, and who create. The Rose Festival is inspiring because it provides these strong, powerful, and incredible role models to people. It shows people that a true princess is someone who is kind and works tirelessly as an ambassador for her community. Little girls can look at the Rose Festival Court and see that their dreams are within reach. The Rose Festival inspires our future leaders and builders by showing them what true strength and accomplishment look like.

Tradition. When I first started thinking about applying for this program, I was blown away by the rich history that the Rose Festival has. I had known that the festival was a tradition, but to think that it had started over a hundred years ago? For generations, the festival has lit up every Portlanders' heart when it comes time to celebrate. When you think of Portland, the festival's vibrancy and excitement immediately come to mind. I recently discovered that my grandma used to work for the Rose Festival, which was an amazing surprise! She worked in reception and assisted in organizing the Starlight and Rose Festival Parades. I asked her about her experience, and she remembers seeing guests and attendees at the festival from throughout the U.S. for whom the festival was a highlight of their year, which seems exactly right. The Rose Festival is a part of Portland. It shows to the world who we are as a city. For years and years, the festival has been a beacon of joy and light to so many people. Every year, it reminds us to celebrate our traditions and to honor what has come before us. People want to be here, celebrating our culture in this festival together.

Evolving. As each year passes, Portland becomes a different city. Some people move in, some people move out. Some businesses open, some businesses close. Each new year brings new ideas and new energy to our city. Still, our core remains the same. Portland is weird, filled

with artistic innovators, forward thinkers, proud soccer fans, and knowledgeable foodies. The Rose Festival is a celebration of Portland, of who we are. It celebrates our history, our memories, and our people. As the city shifts and grows, so does the festival. The celebration is dynamic and has something new and special every year.

The Rose Festival means something to every Portlander. Whatever the festival gives you individually, the Rose Festival is an event that brings people together from all walks of life. No matter who you are, if you are Rose Festival Princess, a marcher in the parade, or someone who brings their kids to enjoy the fun, you are a part of this festival. The Rose Festival is about who we are, and at the Rose Festival, we are all connected.