

Portland's Prime Minister of the Royal Rosarians Aims to Bring Joy Back to The Rose City

By [Sophia Takla](#)



Newest Royal Rosarian Prime Minister Mike Ware poses with his wife, First Lady Colleen at the International Rose Test Garden. [Credit: Mike Ware]

(PORTLAND, Ore.) — Joy is in bloom for the Royal Rosarians under newly installed Prime Minister Mike Ware. The 244 members of this volunteer-led organization, established in 1912, serve as the city of Portland's official greeters and ambassadors of goodwill.

Ware will lead the group in supporting the annual Portland Rose Festival next June, and host hundreds of visitors throughout his year, conducting rose planting ceremonies for visiting dignitaries, and attending global ambassadorial trips. He stepped into his role on Sept. 16 at the Royal Rosarians Prime Minister's Ball.

“The Rose Festival is an annual celebration put on by the Rose Festival Foundation. It consists of three different parades, and the point is to celebrate the rose,” Ware explained in a recent interview with The Click. “Portland became known as The Rose City in the early 1900s. At that point they were looking for a way to stand out from other cities, and to attract residents, as well as visitors. Roses are not native to Oregon. They were first brought out here on the wagon trains by the early settlers, and the climate of Oregon is perfect for growing them.”

Visitors can enjoy one of the world's 11 rose test gardens in Portland's Washington Park, Ware said. “There are roses there that are propagated literally from all over the world,” With more than 610 varieties of the beloved flower, the International Rose Test Garden is the first place Ware would send a visitor. “It's an amazing place. Awesome.”

“The second place I would probably send you is into downtown Portland,” Ware said. “They have an amazing number of restaurants, and it's actually quite safe.” Struggling to come out of the pandemic, Portland is cited by the U.S. Census Bureau as one of the fastest shrinking cities in the nation, due to home prices, homelessness and increased crime.

Asked what he thinks Portland needs as a city right now, Ware said, “I think we need less media

attention on the negative things and more attention on the good things. You know, Portland is not unique in the problems that they're having. Virtually every major city in the United States is experiencing the same issues. I think it is incumbent upon us as an organization as well as that of our sister organizations to highlight the good."

Each year the prime minister spreads the good news of Portland internationally, taking a group of Rosarians, military and friends on what Ware calls an ambassadorial trip. "This year, we're going to be traveling along the St. Lawrence Seaway, visiting Montreal, and Quebec City, as well as several cities on the New York side. Our goal in this trip is to... invite people to come and see us. We hand out our little rose patches, and to each person, we remind them that, 'For you, a rose in Portland grows.'"

This slogan is a timeless Rosarian signature. But each year, a specific theme is chosen to reflect the organization. Ware and his wife, First Lady Colleen, dubbed 2023-24 "Everything's Coming Up Roses."

Asked why, he said, "In all honesty, I liked the Broadway musical, "Gypsy." And the song always stood out to me as one of perseverance and determination. And that to me is where we are today. The Rosarians are persevering through difficult times. We all have the determination to help Portland come back."

To learn more about Portland's Royal Rosarians, watch [this video](#) or visit their website [here](#).

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