

John O'Hara Essay
Contestant #5 – Isabelle Tedrow

Picture a rural county in the most southwestern corner of Pennsylvania, nuzzled against West Virginia. Each July 29th, members of every town in the county come to the county seat, the town of Waynesburg, where a festival called Rain Day is held. A tradition which goes back one hundred forty seven years and holds that on July 29th, the rain will fall. We don't know exactly when it will happen during that day or if it will be sprinkles or a downpour, but we have faith that it will rain. I've realized this year in particular that's what Rain Day means to me, coming together and having faith, and just how precious that is.

This year our towns, our state, our country, the world have faced the COVID-19 pandemic. Shutdowns, cancellations, staying at home made many things very different this year, unprecedented is a word often used and I think rightfully so. Rain Day is one of the things that will be different. There won't be a festival held in town where we all gather, this year we will gather virtually. Usually on Rain Day I would be eating a funnel cake, quenching my thirst on the sweltering July day with ice-cold lemonade. I would be watching my sister's face light up with joy looking at the animals in the petting zoo. What makes Rain Day so special though isn't the things you do on that day. What makes Rain Day special is friends and family, members from all over the county coming together for one day. Running into a friend you haven't seen in awhile, I now realize how precious a commodity that is. I took it for granted before, but I believe this is Rain Day's true importance to me. The people of our community make Rain Day special, and they're doing so this year, even though it will be different. The people of our community are striving to provide a Rain Day in unprecedented times. Making lemonade out of lemons, this lemonade won't quench your thirst, but it will show you how great the people of our community are.

Just like we have faith every year that it will rain on July 29th, we have faith we will have a Rain Day, even if it's different. Our community perseveres through the storm. We have faith that we will make it through all this together as a community. We will still celebrate Rain Day, and it will rain.