

## John O'Hara Essay Award

By Chelsea Coder – Contestant #3

What had started as a farmer's unique observation had spiraled into a custom for Waynesburg Pennsylvania that is celebrated every year. Rainday is a tradition that is celebrated every July 29<sup>th</sup>, and just as the title says; it is a celebration of rain. Though people in other areas might find the idea of anticipating rain and actually enjoying it to be strange, Waynesburg and its surrounding towns find it to be quite normal to their culture and with each person it holds a different meaning.

Rainday can be an umbrella of meanings to people. It can be a once and a while treat for some to attend, or on the opposite spectrum be a yearly tradition. Some people go for the flavorsome foods and thirst-quenching drinks, others for the live entertainment. Some even go just to catch up with some friends. Regardless of why people choose to attend, it is clear that Rainday has changed the typical response to a rainy day; the rain is wished upon rather than wished away.

To me, Rainday is more than just a day filled with rain; it is a special day where I get to spend in my hometown, seeing new and familiar faces, while making a different memory each year. I have been attending Rainday since I was in diapers and have grown up around it. It has become a holiday where I get to enjoy great food and the company of my friends and family. Unlike most holidays celebrated worldwide, Rainday brings together and invites the whole town to have fun together. Not every community has a day in which they celebrate as a whole, and the fact that the small town of Waynesburg can do that is something special.

Before being a contestant of the pageant, I have watched the previous Miss Rain Day's and her courts in the pageant, and on Rainday itself. I remember watching the traditional talent performances held on the stage in front of the courthouse and wishing that one day I could be there. As a child, I did not fully understand the whole meaning and impact of Rain Day. Truthfully I did not even know the full history behind it until doing the pageant. Growing up, I dreamed of becoming a Miss Rain Day, just for the title of it, which is not unusual for a little girl to dream of. Now being a young adult, I realize that there is more than just a crown and trophy to be wishing for. Just by doing the pageant itself has given me the opportunity to meet new people, develop confidence that I can later use in college or job searching, and find the people skills inside me that can help me with my overall life happiness. Rainday has become a milestone for me, and I will continue to enjoy it through the years and one day, bring my children there to experience the magic of it and to make memories of their own.