



**BENSON TECH**

# ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), August 2023 Edition

## Beginning Fall 2024 - It's the Astros!

This spring, the Astros were picked and approved to be Benson Tech's official nickname beginning in the fall 2024 when the school moves into its modernized building on NE 12th Avenue. In presenting the proposed nickname to Portland Public School Board's (PPS) Board of Education, Benson Tech's student body president, Joseph Anderson said: "I believe Astros is a mascot which appropriately reflects the values of Benson students, staff, community and alumni. Astros in particular is most representative of one of Benson's most important values: the future. Due to their association with astronauts, Astros is analogous with innovation and forward thinking.

"I know as our economics, markets, and world evolves, Benson will be right along any changes. I know that our Career Technical Education programs will continue to evolve and continue to offer students the very current standards, equipment, and knowledge.

"This forward thinking mindset and continually evolving curriculum allows our students to move past Benson and find success in their postsecondary pursuits. The close association between our most important and practiced value future and the Astros leads me to strongly believe that the Astros is the most representative of Benson stakeholders and their values."

*(story continues on Page 6)*



**Above:** Alumni sign in at an all-class reunion picnic in 2008, where BPHSAA's story begins.

## BPHSAA celebrates 15 years

In the spring of 2008 amid rumors of Benson Tech being closed, a small group of Benson Tech alumni decided the school needed an alumni association and advocate for the school's future. After drawing up a set of bylaws and proposing a set of directors and officers, the group organized an all-class reunion picnic at Blue Lake Park in August 2008. The alumni attending approved of the new association ... and the rest is history.

Acting on the two missions in its bylaws – to support Benson Tech and the social activities of its alumni — the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) went to work. The association *created a website* to inform alumni of its existence and activities, *started a newsletter*, *began hosting an Alumni Welcome Center* during Tech Show, *sponsored an annual summer picnics* (aka Benson Community Picnic) as well as publicly promoting Benson Tech. Additionally, from the start, the BPHSAA *continued raising money* for the existing ad hoc Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund that awards scholarships each year.

The need for a strong Benson Tech advocate became very apparent in 2009 when Portland Public Schools (PPS) considered turning Benson into a two-year skill center as part of a study of all of its high schools. The BPHSAA and Benson Tech students became focal points in the fight for the school's future. BPHSAA participated in all of the public input meetings as well as sending letters and testifying to the superintendent and the PPS Board in

*(story continues on Page 7)*

## Six graduates awarded 2023 alumni scholarship

The Benson Polytechnic High School 50-year Reunion Award Fund was founded in 1991 thanks to generous donations from the classes of 1939, 1940, and 1941. In its first year, the fund awarded \$250 apiece to two deserving graduates. In the years since, the endowment (renamed the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund in 2012) has grown considerably, and is now managed by the Oregon Community Foundation where its 501(c)3 status allows donors to make tax-exempt contributions. This spring, the fund's earnings provided over \$9,000 in scholarships for six Benson Tech class of 2023 graduates. Recipients were selected based on their high school achievements, strength of character, and educational objectives, with preference given to individuals enrolling in two-year vocational training or pre-professional academic programs.

### *More about the 2023 Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship awardees:*

**Edrian “Tony” Carceres Cen** was raised in Portland to parents who immigrated from the Mexican state of Yucatan. For many years, he served as the primary translator for his Spanish-speaking family members, and is proud to have earned the Oregon Department of Education’s “Oregon State Seal of Biliteracy.”

Tony was a digital media major at Benson Tech. He maintained an impressive 3.67 weighted GPA while working 20 hours a week and taking a rigorous course load, including multiple Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Tony also has been recognized as a Portland Community College (PCC) Future Connect Scholar, and was also awarded the Weston Public Foundation Career and Technical Education Scholarship. Tony plans to enroll in PCC this fall, where he will pursue a degree in multimedia, with a focus in either graphic design, video editing, or animation, and aspires to one day serve his country by joining the Marines or another branch of the military.

Tony credits Benson Tech with preparing him for life after high school, and would like to thank the school’s counselors—particularly Katie Clark, Amy Henry, and Kathleen Reid—for helping him navigate the college and scholarship application process.

**Kimmy Trinh** was born in Portland to parents who immigrated from Vietnam. A stellar student, Kimmy maintained a near-perfect 3.98 GPA at Benson Tech while enrolled in accelerated courses and majoring in health occupations with a dental focus. Kimmy is fluent in Vietnamese as well as English, and volunteers for multiple cultural



organizations, including the White Lotus Foundation and The Asian Health & Service Center.

Kimmy will attend PCC with the intention of majoring in radiography and earning her Radiology Tech Certification. She is passionate about women’s health, and looks forward to a career as a mammography technician. Kimmy is proud of the educational habits she developed and academic goals that she achieved during her time at Benson Tech, and thanks the Benson Tech staff for both encouraging her and providing her the opportunity to explore a wide range of professional fields.

Born and raised in Portland, **Mary Jane “MJ” Barber** traces her long-standing enthusiasm for computers and technology back to her first tablet (a gift from her mom). She credits her mechanically inclined dad with inspiring this interest, and her time at Benson Tech with nurturing her skills. A computer science major, MJ dipped her toes into video game development for her senior project, collaborating with classmates to translate a tabletop role playing game into digital form. Though she enjoyed this challenge, it was the process of building a personal computer that solidified her love for computer hardware, a passion MJ is excited to pursue when she enrolls in the microelectronics track at PCC this fall.



In addition to being an honors student and fixture at school events, MJ was an integral member of Benson Tech’s FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Team #187. Her contributions to the team included helping to oversee their masking adherence and vaccination efforts, enabling them to safely meet throughout the pandemic. MJ worked tirelessly with her teammates over the summers to secure a spot in the FIRST Robotics state competition, and was honored to be selected as team co-captain during her senior year. MJ is grateful to the BPHSAA for its support of the school’s Robotics Club, and to the alumni whose generous donations endow the alumni scholarship fund.

Other 2023 Alumni Scholarship recipients:

- **Oscar Bautista**, KBPS major. Plans to attend PCC to study communications
- **Jeremy Nguyen**, Design major. Plans to attend PCC to study nanotechnology
- **Kaylee Wester**, Design major. Plans to attend Rogue CC to study business administration.

### 2023 Graduation

During the June 5 graduation ceremony at Providence Park, 206 Benson Tech seniors out of a class of 217 received their diplomas. Principal Curtis Wilson expects that at least three to four seniors will be completing all of their requirements during the 2023 summer school, again putting Benson Tech 2023 graduating rate among the upper tier of Oregon's high schools. *Congratulations to all of you from the BPHSAA!*

### 2023 Track and Field news

Several members of Tech's Track and Field Team qualified for the Oregon State Athletic Association's Track and Field Meet in May in Eugene: Kavon Bradford (100m), Malaya Lesueur (100m, 200m, long jump and triple jump) and Dylan Douan-phrachanh (long jump) with Dylan placing fourth in his event.

### Retiring Benson Tech teachers and staff

Benson Tech math teacher Susan Rhodes and Librarian

Assistant Irma Johnson retired at the end of the 2022-23 school year. *Thank you from the BPHSAA for your years of contribution to Benson Tech and our best wishes for the years ahead!*

### BPHSAA Annual Meeting

Advanced planning is underway for the 2023 Annual Meeting of the BPHSAA to be held in November. In addition to the election of directors to fill vacant positions (two currently), an in-depth presentation of the move into the modernized building is being planned, as well as food and drink. Check [www.ben-sontechalumni.org](http://www.ben-sontechalumni.org) for an exact November date and location.

### 2024 Tech Show dates set

The 2024 Tech Show will be April 18th and 19th. This will be the last Tech Show held at Benson Tech's interim home on the Marshall Campus (3905 SE 91st Avenue, Portland OR) before returning to the modernized school on NE 12th Avenue for the 2024-2025 school year.

### Football coach to be hired

To bring back football for the 2024 season, Principal Curtis Wilson plans to hire a football coach this fall. Interested students will begin working out, practicing and bonding as a team during the upcoming 2024 Spring workouts. The plan is to initially resume football at Benson Tech with a junior varsity team for the 2024 season before fielding a varsity team a year or two later.

## ALUMNI TEXT CREDITS

**Co-Editors:** Dale Bajema and Roger Edwards

We'd like to thank Gerry Ochs, Rachael Lizio Katzen Kuryunny, Rob Johns, and Curtis Wilson for the articles, background information and facts, and photos. And a special thanks to Connie Mar, our newsletter designer.

## BPHSAA TRIVIA QUIZ

- **Question 1:** How did the BPHSAA get an ad in the 2023 Blueprint?
- **Question 2:** What is the official Benson Tech sprocket made of?
- **Question 3:** When will the restoration of the Benson buildings be done?
- **Question 4:** What were the also-rans in the Benson Tech mascot selection?
- **Question 5:** What are the details of the design and production of the two round, Space Age decals?



- **Answer 1:** Up until 1967, Benson yearbooks were full of ads. They appeared more sporadically after that. Because a BPHSAA ad would speak directly to a graduate planning a reunion, a yearbook ad is an optimal way for the BPHSAA to connect with alumni. A simple query to the Blueprint advisor was well received and Page 158 of the 2023 Blueprint will remind alumni forever of their alumni association.
- **Answer 2:** It was constructed with plaster. In 1957, Principal Leon Minear toured the plaster apprentice facility and suggested the Benson Tech seal as a training exercise. The architecture class produced detailed drawings that got the project underway. These drawings might be when gear teeth were added to the original circular seal submitted by Urie McCleary (Class of 1923) in 1921.
- **Answer 3:** Students are scheduled to return to 12th and Irving in the fall of 2024. After the June 2024 graduation, access to classrooms will become available for teachers.
- **Answer 4:** The Astros beat out the Engineers and Technicians in the final selection. Prior to that the Bubblers of Benson Tech had some appeal, and the Benson Tech Torque had even less.
- **Answer 5:** The derivation of the decal pictured above (and a second on Page 6) have not been discovered. Perhaps the alumni can answer this question? The backside of both decals bear the stamp of "Advertising Displays, Inc., 1310 SW 1st Avenue, Portland 1, Oregon, CA 3-2158." The T-square and triangle decal has been recalled from 1963 but the date the two became available is unknown.



# MODERNIZATION CONSTRUCTION SPOTLIGHT



## Benson Tech Modernization Status Update for Summer 2023

*By Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977)*

Progress continues throughout the entire project and the newest building, Building F, has really taken shape since my last visit on March 9, 2023. The restored windows are now back in place in the original school building, restoration of the skylights in the second floor hallway are near completion, also sheetrock, painting and duct work are ongoing throughout the building. The original wooden staircase banisters are undergoing restoration with the surface imperfections filled in, wood sanded smooth and prepared for staining. (See Photo 6 for an example of the work and a mock-up of the new stain to be used.

Improvements to the foundry, Building D, continue with seismic upgrades of interior shear wall construction ongoing from the basement level foundation upwards. Seismic improvements to the roof are in place and will be tied in with the shear wall components to complete the system.

Progress continues on upgrades to both gymnasiums, G1 and G2. Gym G1 is undergoing some lead paint

abatement with removal of lead base paint discovered on the wooden ceiling decking. Portions of the old paint have chipped and require scraping to allow proper encapsulation of the material. The exterior walls of Gym G2 have received necessary seismic upgrades and are now insulated and being covered in DensGlas sheathing for application of the new exterior brick work (see Photo 2).

Building H improvements continue with classrooms and auto shops framed in throughout the building. It will include an acoustic floor system, just as in Building C. The acoustic floor is near completion and will eliminate noise between the floors. Equipment for the chiller room is now on site with layout and preparations for installation underway.

Building C has interior steel framing complete. Progress continues with installation of the finished wood paneling and painting in the hallways. Hallway lockers are now being installed as well. The chemistry rooms have received sheetrock and painting.

Building B is well underway with the interior framing for counseling offices complete and the new library

*(story continues on next page)*



**Photo 1 (on Page 4):** Progress continues on restoration of the auditorium. This view is from the stage. **Photo 2:** View of SE corner of Gym G2, with seismic upgrades in place. Insulation is complete and DensGlass sheathing for the walls are being installed. The new brick will be attached to the DensGlass sheathing to complete the exterior finish. **Photo 3:** Skylight restoration in original Building E in the second-floor hallway. **Photo 4:** View north of the grand open space inside Building F. Note the teaching stairs in the background under construction. Building F is an impressive common space addition to the new school. **Photo 5:** The original staircase banisters are undergoing restoration and will receive a new stained finish as shown in this mock-up. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

windows installed on the north wall facing out to Irving street. The windows are very impressive at 12 feet wide by 20 feet high.

Building F has had major progress since my last visit and creates a grand space in the heart of the school (see Photo 4.) This building will serve as a common open space with a large section of learning stairs at the north end for seating during gatherings and presentations.

The auditorium restoration and upgrades continue. The original upper balcony seats have now been removed for restoration. The top row of seats will be reinstalled in place and the remaining upper balcony seats will be restored and placed in various locations throughout the

school, including a row of nine seats to be installed in the new alumni room, which is located on the second floor at the back, or west end of the auditorium. The mechanical room in the lower level of the auditorium has progressed; equipment is in place with the duct work staged and being installed throughout the building.

Work continues on the four new elevator shafts located on campus and the penthouse for the new elevator in the SE corner of Building C is in place with new brickwork.

My thanks to Jen Sohm/Senior PM PPS and Mark Kline/PPS-CBRE for my site tour on June 29, 2023.



# The Astros are coming! The Astros are coming!

Have you ever had a wish come true? Jamie Carter, Class of 1999, will soon have such a moment. She had her wish published in her senior Blueprint (see photo at bottom right) and will soon see it come to fruition. The 24-year delay may diminish her joy but because so many wishes go unanswered, any dream fulfilled is cause for celebration.

The progression of Benson Tech mascots, from Mechanics to Engineers to Astros parallels the sophistication of technology. The Space Age was launched with the successful orbiting of the USSR's Sputnik satellite in 1957. Our Blueprint crew took notice and responded in the 1958 yearbook with diagrams of orbiting electrons, a dedication to science and engineering teachers, and multiple drawings of rocket ships. Attendees arriving at that year's Tech Show found a nearly 40 foot tall rocket ship on the front lawn with flashing lights, roars, and hissing steam and fire in a simulated take-off. The 1959 Tech



Show was hosted by Class of 1959 grad John Palmore's radio controlled robot that walked forward, backward, left and right, with additional arm and head motions.

Science teacher John Harlan came to Benson in 1972 after engineers for the moon landing had to seek new careers. His aerospace background had regular practical applications during his 25-year tenure at the school.

Jamie's expressed interest in a cute little spaceman elevated him to a regular feature at Benson Tech. He guided readers through the 2000 Blueprint and was christened Simon the Spaceman in 2002. By 2006, his portrait was used as a place holder for camera-shy seniors. Spacemen graced

the front covers of the 2012 and 2013 Blueprints, and Page 67 of the 2016 Blueprint has a photo of a real Techman in a real space suit. This Astro has been a Benson Tech mascot ever since and so it is not surprising that he now will be our official representative.

## Beginning Fall 2024, continued from front cover

Though Benson Tech had been known for years as the Techmen, many current students wanted a more inclusive, gender-neutral name, and reflective of the future. Earlier this year, Principal Curtis Wilson formed a committee of students, alumni and other stakeholders to pick a new nickname and mascot for Benson Tech. (Neither the name nor the school colors of blue and orange were under consideration to be changed.) The committee oversaw a first survey to gather suggestions, a second one to narrow down the ideas, and then picked the Astros.

In the coming months a design company, under contract with PPS, will develop an official logo for uniforms, apparel, printed material, etc., as well as a "mascot" to represent Benson Tech at school and athletic events before the start of the 2024-25 school year. Until then, Benson Tech will continue being known as the Techmen.

(See the article above, which details the continued and long-standing interest in connecting Benson Tech's mascot with forward-thinking technology, such as space exploration and the "Astros.")

## WHERE'S OUR MASCOT?

Mascots-people dressing in tacky costumes running around at games representing schools. Lincoln has the cardinal, Madison has the senator. But what does Benson have? Sure, we are the Techmen, proud as can be, but where's the tacky costume? Don't get me wrong, the sprocket has served us well. It brings pride and honor to our school, it's a strong symbol of what we are. But I think we need to have some fun now. The sprocket is way too serious. Once upon a time, many, many years ago, Benson did have a mascot, other than the sprocket. He was a little spaceman waving a Tech pennant. He has a huge nose and a helmet that's entirely too big for his egg plant shaped head. He's a cute little guy, and I think it's time to bring him back!

-by Jamie Carter





## **BPHSAA celebrates 15 years continued from front cover**

support for Benson Tech to be a “strengthened” four-year comprehensive high school with a Career Technical Education (CTE) focus.

When PPS concluded in 2010 that Benson Tech might continue as a four-year CTE school with only 850 students, the BPHSAA’s advocacy effort for the next 10 years kicked into overdrive. The first success, by mobilizing industry and other supporters, was to pressure PPS to increase the number of entering freshmen. Later, the BPHSAA worked with teachers to strengthen Benson Tech’s CTE courses, including obtaining a state grant for the architecture program.

When PPS decided to modernize all of its high schools, BPHSAA members on PPS committees made sure that the “costly” modernization of the school for 1,750 students was not ‘put off to last.” A number of BPHSAA members played leading roles in the Master Planning Committee (MPC) and Design Advisory Committee (DAG) that sought out and reviewed public input for the design of the modernized Benson Tech (set to open in 2024). When funding from first PPS bond measures became insufficient, the BPHSAA continued to support the passage of another bond measure, as well as work with PPS staff to keep Benson Tech’s modernization on schedule.

Knowing that communications are very important, from the beginning the BPHSAA has had a website — [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org) — with “selected school news” information about the Association’s events and elections, minutes of meeting, copies of the newsletters, bylaws, etc. It also has several social media sites to help Benson Tech alumni stay in touch with the school and the Association.

Though “saving Benson” and advocating for its modernization has been a decade-long preoccupation, the BPHSAA has not neglected supporting social activities for Benson Tech alumni.

The BPHSAA has sponsored an annual alumni summer picnic — now named the Benson Community Picnic — to include all of Benson Tech’s stakeholders and supporters. It has hosted an Alumni Welcome Room during Tech Show, complete with a display of old yearbooks, refreshments, and exhibits. And the BPHSAA has served and continues to serve as a helpful resource for individuals organizing class reunions, helping to locate old classmates and publicize the events. On the occasion of Benson Tech’s 100th anniversary, the BPHSAA held a three-day, multi-event Grand Reunion that included a dinner held at the Oregon Historical Society.

On numerous occasions over the past 15 years, the BPHSAA has been able to offer (from its dues and donations) financial assistance to Benson Tech teachers’ projects and student activities (e.g., the Robotics Club, etc. ) In 2010 the Association helped create the Benson Tech Foundation — a 501c(3) tax exempt organization — to raise larger amounts of money for Benson Tech’s Career Technical Education (CTE) programs.

During its existence, the BPHSAA has been the stable outside stakeholder working for Benson Tech’s continuation and success. Knowing that parental involvement and support is also important to the success of any high school, the BPHSAA has been a strong supporter of the evolving parent support groups, such as the PTA, Tech Pride Volunteers, and the Benson Tech Boosters.

Over the past 15 years, things have changed. From being on the brink of Benson Tech being closed in 2010 or turned into a “skill center” to being poised to move into a \$300+ million modernized campus in 2024, it has supported three Benson Tech principals and hundreds of teachers to strengthen the school. Through a changing dedicated group of directors and officers, the BPHSAA has refined its activities and efforts to be ready for the next 15 years of service to Benson Tech and its alumni.



## REUNION INFORMATION

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### CLASS OF 1964 - 60th Reunion

We are in the early planning stages, and have not yet selected a venue or a date for 2024. We have formed a small planning committee consisting of Ron Hoff, Dan Burgess, Gil Lissy, Richard Probasco, and Phil Bisner, and welcome your ideas and input.

We're also trying to update our mailing list so please pass on any contact info you have for our classmates.

#### CONTACT:

Please send suggestions and contact information to:

- Ron Hoff — [qballhoff@gmail.com](mailto:qballhoff@gmail.com) (503) 789-1662
- Dan Burgess — [dburgess38@att.net](mailto:dburgess38@att.net) (503) 930-9899

### CLASS OF 1973 - 50th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, August 19, and Sunday, August 20, 2023

**WHAT:** Saturday evening adults-only dinner, and dancing, 6:00 – 11:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Sah Hah Lee Golf Course (17104 SE 130th Avenue, Clackamas, OR 97015)

**WHAT:** Sunday afternoon all-ages picnic, 12:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Blue Lake Park (1224 NE Blue Lake Road, Fairview, OR 97024)

**CONTACT:** Questions? Contact Jeff Dixon at [jeffdixon@comcast.net](mailto:jeffdixon@comcast.net).

### CLASS OF 1978 - 45th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 9, 2023

**WHAT:** Saturday evening adults-only gathering, time TBD.

**WHERE:** McMenamin's Kennedy School Gym (5736 NE 33rd Ave, Portland, OR 97211)

**CONTACT:** For updated information and tickets, please visit the BPHSAA Reunion webpage and join the Benson Tech Class of 78 Facebook group.

Questions? Contact Brad Cameron at 503-236-1213, or email the planning committee at [BensonTechClassfo1978@gmail.com](mailto:BensonTechClassfo1978@gmail.com).

### CLASS OF 1983 - 40th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 23, 2023

**WHAT:** Friday evening adults-only gathering, 6:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** The Village Ballroom (704 NE Dekum, Portland, OR 97211)

**FACEBOOK:** Join the Class of 1983 Facebook group for updates and details: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bensonclassof83>.

**CONTACT:** If you have questions or if you'd like to help with the event, email [Bensontech83@gmail.com](mailto:Bensontech83@gmail.com)

### CLASS OF 1985 - 38th Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, August 26, 2023

**WHAT:** Casual, adults-only gathering with cash bar, 2:00-5:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Kenton Station (8303 N Denver, Portland 97217).

**CONTACT:** Questions? Michael Chin at [Michael.chin@evrazna.com](mailto:Michael.chin@evrazna.com) or via text at 503-539-1799.



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## Is your class planning a reunion?

If you and your classmates are actively planning a reunion, or are simply interested in beginning the process, please let the BPHSAA know. Send your updates to [info@bensontechalumni.com](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.com), and don't forget to include:

- **When** (dates and times)
- **What** (the nature of the events — adults-only or families welcome, catered or potluck, or BYO food and drink, etc.)
- **Where**
- **Cost and how to purchase tickets**
- **Event website or Facebook page** (if applicable)
- **Contact information** for the organizer(s)

We can help you to spread the word through our alumni emails and social media accounts, and will even post announcements on our website ([www.BensonTechAlumni.org](http://www.BensonTechAlumni.org)) and in our seasonal newsletters!