



BENSON TECH

ALUMNI TEXT

In Brief- BPHSAA and Benson Tech News

Page 2

Benson Tech Modernization

Page 6

2024 Scholarship Winners

Page 10

The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), September 2024 Edition



(Photo courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

Modernized Benson Tech dedicated

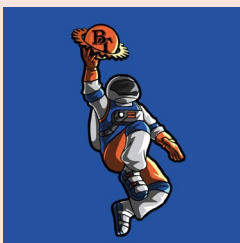
A significantly modernized Benson Polytechnic High School is being formally dedicated on September 14, 2024 by Portland Public Schools (PPS) Superintendent Dr. Kimberlee Armstrong, Principal Curtis Wilson, and other officials.

The three-year construction project has updated Portland's polytechnical high school built in 1916-17, initially financed by Simon Benson, into a school reimagined to

meet the challenges of the 21st century. The physical construction for the school was preceded by years of public input, detailed planning, funding issues, and relocation of Benson Tech students and staff off site while the construction occurred.

A more detailed account of the entire modernization project and photos of the actual construction begin on Page 6 of this newsletter.

THE BENSON TECH ASTROS HAVE LANDED!



As the 2024-2025 school year begins, Benson Tech's mascot and nickname is now officially the Benson Tech Astros.

The name was selected in 2023 by students, teachers and other Benson stakeholders after students asked that a gender-neutral, more inclusive, and more

reflective of the future name replace the historically used Techmen/Techsters. In proposing the new name to the PPS Board of Education, Benson Tech student body president, Joseph Anderson, said "I believe Astros is a mascot which appropriately reflects the values of Benson students, staff, community

(story continues on back cover)



BPHSAA annual meeting date set

The BPHSAA will hold its Annual Meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 18. The meeting will be held in Benson Tech's new community room directly inside the front entrance of the newly modernized school.

The main order of business will be to fill five vacant, three-year director positions to the 15-member Board of Directors. The Board meets monthly through the entire year to set policy and plan BPHSAA activities. In reality, the directors do most of the day-to-day BPHSAA work, including hosting the Alumni Room during Tech Show, holding the annual Benson Community Picnic, supporting individual class reunions, publicly advocating for Benson Tech, preserving records and artifacts, maintaining a website, and publishing a newsletter and on social media platforms. If you're interested in becoming a director, attend the Oct. 14 BPHSAA Board meeting to learn more.

Enrollment is up

As of September 4, Benson Tech's enrollment is up to 909 students with a larger incoming class of freshman. With the prospect of Benson Tech moving back into its modernized campus on NE 12th Ave., about 500 eighth graders applied to attend this fall. In turn, Benson Tech was allowed to enroll 325 freshmen and 20 transferring sophomores.

Benson Tech wins Battle of the Books

A team of four Benson Tech students won Oregon's 2024 Battle of the Books this past spring. Fierce competition raged

during the meet as teams answered often detailed and obscure questions about the 12 books they had previously been given to read and study. It came down to four tiebreakers in the final round before Benson Tech was declared Oregon's Champion of the year. The team included Olivia Barzoloski, Sarinem Kasanmoediran, Zahra Faruqui, and Zayd Faruqui and was advised by Benson Tech Librarian Carl Larson.

Benson Tech's new cell phone policy

Amid a growing national concern that excessive use of cell phones at school is adversely affecting learning, Benson Tech, along with other Oregon schools, has adopted a new cell phone policy for the 2024-2025 school year.

Benson Tech recognizes that cell phones are an important part of its students' lives, but their use can be a classroom distraction and interfere with learning. The new policy attempts to balance the benefits with the drawbacks. In essence, Benson Tech's policy is that students cannot use their cell phones while in the classroom, but may use them before school, during lunch time and while "passing." If parent/guardians have an emergency, they can call a special number and the message will be relayed ASAP to the student. Furthermore, there is now an escalating set of penalties when students violate the policy, ranging from taking the phone for the period to calling the parent/guardian to come pick up the phone.

Promote your local business in the BPHSAA Alumni Business Directory

Are you a Benson Polytechnic High School graduate who owns a local business? If so, we want to feature you! By showcasing alumni-owned businesses in the BPHSAA Alumni Business Directory, we aim to help get the word out of businesses that are owned by our fellow Benson Tech alums. As a result, this will help build a network of Benson Tech entrepreneurs, inspire future generations of alumni, and help all of us support our local economies while also supporting our fellow alumni.

Why Participate?

- **Boost visibility of your business:** In addition to including your business in the BPHSAA Alumni Business Directory, there may be occasions to potentially include your business on the BPHSAA website.
- **Social media exposure:** Be featured on Benson Tech's official social media channels.

- **BPHSAA newsletter spotlight:** Gain recognition in our upcoming alumni newsletters.
- **Potential engagement in Benson Tech events:** Your business could be one of the businesses we reach out to for participation in events such as the annual Tech Show, alumni picnics and other networking events.

How to Get Involved

1. Fill out the submission form here: bensontechalumni.org/AlumniBusinessDirectoryForm.
2. Stay Connected: Follow us on social media and at the BPHSAA website (bensontechalumni.org) for updates and events.

Let's showcase your business and keep the Benson Tech spirit alive!

Benson Tech football update

By Bob Walker, Class of 1977

Benson Tech Football is off and running in the right direction, led by Head Coach Kendall Lewis, who took over late in July. Coming to Portland from Seattle, WA, where he coached football and basketball, Coach Lewis has also taught special education, worked as an athletic coordinator, para educator and a re-engagement coordinator. He has coached and worked in the school system for the last 12 years.

Since taking over as the head coach, Coach Lewis has been working to grow the program from the bottom up, and has hired a good mix of coaches to help him guide the young athletes on and off

the field. Darien Dyles will head the defense, while Shawn White will head the offense. Both coaches have a lot of experience not just as players but also as coaches, with a passion for helping the next generation of athletes reach their full potential. Rounding out the coaching staff this year will be Daviar Wexler, a Benson Tech alumni (Class of 2019) and former football player, and Walter Garcia, who also serves as the lead officer of the building.

Coach Lewis is excited for the future of football at Benson Tech and believes that as long as the kids buy into his "three-bone" system: Back Bone, Wish Bone, and Funny Bone, then wins and losses

will take care of themselves and the kids will come away loving their experience playing a sport they all grew up watching, loving and playing. Coach Lewis is excited to join such a wonderful community, and would love to see everyone out at Buckman Field on game days. The team will release the schedule soon, and it is planning on playing a Homecoming Game in October.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Coach Lewis at kelewis@pps.net and don't forget to follow the team on instagram at [ben-son_tech_football_24](https://www.instagram.com/benson_tech_football_24).



2025 TECH SHOW
April 17-April 18, 2025

- New modernized building
- New equipment and facilities
- New features
- Fresh enthusiasm and excitement

It's To Be Big, Big, Big !!!

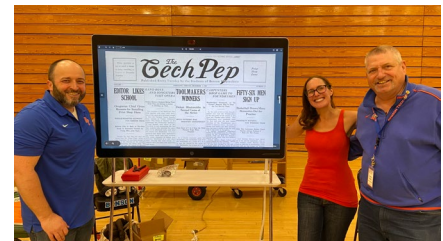
New life for the Tech Pep

At the Tech Show last year, the BPHSAA displayed an electronically digitized copy of the Tech Pep first volume, #1 issue. Dated Sept. 21, 1920, and like the issues that followed, it heralds the fulfillment of the role Simon Benson knew the school would achieve.

The four-page, weekly paper was written and printed in-house and went from five to eight columns in a few years. Each new issue was systemically archived upon publication as a record of the school's development. The coming of the computer age made publication much easier and oddly lessened interest in reporting school news. Publication became more erratic and archiving less important. Worse still was that some saved volumes were discarded.

There are rumors that the move of the library during the 1990 remodeling was the first loss of past issues. More would have been lost if KBPS instructor Steve Naganuma hadn't stopped their trip on the way to a dumpster.

At this time, most issues from September 1920 to May 1960 have been preserved. But they are all on newsprint,



Above: The digitized version of the Tech Pep, Volume 1, Issue 1, from 1920, on display at 2024 Tech Show, flanked by BPHSAA board members Josh Piper (left) and Rachael Lizio Katzen Kurynny and Gerry Ochs (right). (Photo courtesy of BPHSAA.)

which does not age well, even for periods less than 100 years. Digitizing the issues not only preserves them but also makes them searchable. This feature provides an optimal index for readers.

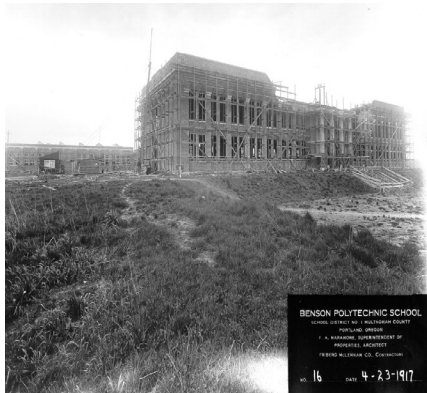
The digitization process continues and has progressed through school year 1928. The scanned issues are posted on the BPHSAA website ([bensontechalumni.org](https://www.bensontechalumni.org)) under Members. (You must be logged into your membership account to gain access to the files.) Browsers there are encouraged to check their stored keepsakes. Loose copies of the Tech Pep that you may have are welcome additions to this effort.

ALUMNI TEXT CREDITS

Co-Editors: Dale Bajema and Roger Edwards

We would like to thank Kelly Janes, Rob Johns, Rachael Lizio Katzen Kurynny, Gerry Ochs, Thomas Smith and Bob Walker for their articles, as well as Dan Malone, Kevin Clark, Curtis Wilson, and Kendall Lewis for their information and assistance in creating this newsletter. And as always, for the diligent efforts of Connie Mar, our designer.

A brief history of the modernization of Benson Tech



By Dale Bajema, Class of 1954 and Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D., Class of 1984

The story of the modernizing of Benson Polytechnic High School stretches back before breaking ground on August 7, 2021 – before Portland Public Schools (PPS) even authorized the construction. In a sense, it stretches back to 1915 when Simon Benson, a prominent Portland lumberman and business leader, gave PPS \$100K to build a school combining the usual high school curriculum with in-depth technical training previously only found in the Portland Trade School. The resulting Benson Polytechnic High School, initially only for boys, opened in September 1917. Under its first principal Charles E. Cleveland, Benson Tech immediately thrived. Over the next 80+ years, additions were made to the building, Benson Tech became co-ed and technical programs were added and dropped to meet the needs of America's evolving work place.

As Benson Tech moved into the 21st century, many alumni believed it needed a strong advocate to protect and advance its interests in a changing world. In 2008, the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) was formed. It immediately began discussing rebuilding and re-equipping Benson Tech with anyone who would listen, including the PPS buildings committee. To excite interest, alumni members created elaborate architectural renderings of what might be possible.

At the same time, a variety of issues among all of Portland's high schools arose, including questions about the need for a technically focused high school with so many students going on to college. In fall 2009, PPS started a High School Design study involving extensive public input and PPS Board of Education (BOE) discussions.

The study took up the question of whether Simon Benson's vision of a four-year technically focused high school was still needed or whether Benson should be turned into a half-day, two-year "skills center" for students. That option drew massive protests from the BPHSAA and existing Benson Tech students. In summer of 2010, the BOE approved its final recommendations, including redrawing boundaries between the neighborhood high schools, closing John Marshall High School, and continuing Benson Tech as a four-year "comprehensive" high school with a technical focus.

In late 2010, PPS recognized that all of its high schools needed renovation. It subsequently announced a 30-year capital projects modernization plan to be financed by a series of voter-approved measures to issue bonds. To handle the long-term design and actual construction effort, PPS created a new Office of School Modernization (OSM). The first bond measure was passed in May 2012 for the purpose of modernizing Roosevelt, Franklin and Grant.

Once PPS announced its modernization plan, the OSM recognized that updating Benson Tech would be a complex undertaking. Over the years, the school had suffered inadequate maintenance. It had not been built for current standards of seismic stability. Heavy metals had been found in its drinking water. It was not compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The construction space was "tight" and conducting classes during construction might be impossible. Any modernization would require not only extra time but expert skill.

At the beginning of 2016, in anticipation that Benson Tech would be on the second bond measure, OSM assembled a Master Planning Committee (MPC) made up of diverse Benson Tech community stakeholders to obtain its vision of Tech's future. (See Page 9 for a list of members.) OSM had earlier hired the architectural firm DOWA-IBI Group to begin the moderniza-

(story continues on next page)

A shout-out to Jen Sohm

PPS' Office of School Modernization appointed Jen Sohm as a quality manager at the start of the Benson Tech Modernization project and she's here as the senior project manager at its finish.

She quickly and conscientiously familiarized herself with the existing building, facilities and programs; Benson Tech's culture and traditions; and future aspirations of its alumni, students and teachers. She took the time to attend Benson Tech events and to meet and get to know

us individually. She understood us as a unique school with a strong sense of our history and contributing to Portland over the years. That knowledge allowed her to advocate for Benson Tech while diligently fulfilling her many other responsibilities as senior project manager.

Over the 10-year project, she was always calm, professional, focused, committed, and dedicated. She was "there for us" when we had concerns and questions, whether it was in formal meetings or ad

hoc occasions. Without her diligence, many critical decisions and details that have made the modernized Benson Tech a state-of-the-art center of excellence for technical education would never have been achieved.

The BPHSAA wishes to thank you, Jen, for all you did to make the Benson Tech community's vision for the school's future come true!

tion design work as well as to facilitate the MPC meetings.

Meeting from Jan. 28, 2016 to May 4, 2018, the MPC repeatedly asked that among other things: a) Benson Tech should remain a four-year comprehensive high school with a technical focus with the capacity for 1,700 students; b) all seismic, water, ventilation, and other deficiencies be completely modernized and not just be remediated and retrofitted with a few upgrades; c) it should become fully ADA compliant; d) its historic classic revival architectural features on the National Register for Historic Places be preserved; e) PPS' Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG) programs be moved out of Benson Tech; f) Benson Tech's arts and music programs should be re-established as before; g) the auditorium and "Old Gym" be retained; h) it should be modernized for a full complement of athletic programs; i) CTE programs "lost to prior enrollment caps" be revived, current CTE programs expanded, and new CTE programs added to meet the evolving workplace needs; and j) technical learning and classroom space and equipment be added as appropriate.

In 2017, a second levy of nearly \$800M to modernize Benson Tech, Madison (now McDaniels), and Lincoln was passed. OSM thought that the complexities of Benson Tech's modernization would take more planning time and moved it to "third" in line, which led to subsequent funding problems. Early in 2018, OSM hired Bassetti Architects to handle the predesign for Benson Tech's modernization and then for the subsequent modernization schematic and curricular design phases.

In May 2018, OSM announced that with escalating construction costs for Lincoln and McDaniels, there remained only enough of the 2017 bond fund to finish those two projects. PPS decided that other than to continue planning, funds for construction of Benson Tech would have to wait for the passage of a third bond levy .

On Dec. 18, 2018, PPS BOE approved OSM's Benson Tech Master Plan, with the solid endorsement of then Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero.

OSM in late 2018 assembled a second group of Benson Tech stakeholders as a Design Advisory Group (DAG). Andersen

Construction, initially hired for construction consulting and later for the actual construction, also attended the MPC meetings. (See Page 9 for a list of members.) The group met from Oct. 4, 2018 to Jan. 13, 2022, serving as a sounding board for OSM's and Bassetti's continuing design work. The presence of the DAG members, OSM, Bassetti, and later Andersen facilitated the rapid exchange of ideas and tentative decisions. OSM's Jen Sohm (see article on Page 4) also helped immeasurably. While the discussions were often heated as the DAG/alumni members pressed PPS, agreement was reached on many points, including to "swing" Benson Tech to the former Marshall High School campus during the construction phase to reduce costs and speed construction, as well as design features such as indoor and outdoor "common areas," the Learning Stairs, and two-story wings combining technical and related academic space.

If not for the dogged efforts and vision of the Benson Tech community over the previous decade, the approved design would not be for a forward-looking high school with features to make it a unique place for learning about ever-evolving technology.

With the passage of the third levy of \$1.2B in May 2020, PPS BOE approved OSM's recommendations. OSM, working with Bassetti Architects and Andersen Construction, spent another year completing the final plans necessary for construction.

With the planned start of construction in the fall of 2021, OSM and Benson Tech teachers and staff (including a newly hired Vice Principal for Modernization Dan Malone) quickly made a large number of decisions regarding what equipment would be moved to the Marshall campus for Benson Tech use while there, what would be stored for use in the modernized school, and what would be thrown away. Eventually, OSM was able to auction off some of equipment and recycled other materials. Similar decisions were made regarding the building itself, including refinishing the original window frames and sashes made of old-growth fir lumber, and large fir beams that were re-purposed

On Aug. 7, 2021, a formal groundbreaking ceremony was held at Benson Tech, presided over by then Superintendent Gua-



dalupe Guerrero and Benson Tech Principal Curtis Wilson.

Benson Tech moved into the former Marshall High School building to start the 2021-22 fall semester and remained there through the 2023-2024 school year. Though not built as a technically focused school, with the newly added annex, the Marshall campus allowed Benson Tech to reasonably function as intended.

Andersen Construction moved on to the Benson Tech site in the summer of 2021 and proceeded with implementing the modernization plan.

During this past spring and summer, the project team has installed new equipment and furniture, moved selected equipment and all of the library books from the Marshall campus into the modernized building, and largely completed the construction on schedule. The remaining things are being wrapped up this fall without seriously affecting classes.

It has been a "journey" taking many years, but Benson Polytechnic High School is now "home" in a state-of-art modernized building that will be a center of learning excellence for PPS students in the decades to come.

More information of the construction phase can be found in Gerry Ochs' article beginning on Page 6 as well as articles and photos that have appeared in the Alumni Text Newsletter over the past three years. These can be found on the BPHSAA website (bensontechalumni.org) under [About Us](#)>[Newsletters](#).



Photo 1: The updated auditorium, outfitted with a state-of-the-art audio and visual systems, will support Benson Tech's arts and music programs
Photo 2: New atrium gathering space located between Building E and the new Building F located in the background. The view is south from inside the new community conference room in Building E, just behind the main school entrance. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

Benson Tech Modernization - 2024 Project Completion

By Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977)

The Benson Polytechnic High School Modernization has been successfully completed after three long years of dedicated hard work and coordinated effort. Its success is results from the combination of a visionary, well-thought-out design for the future of the school and a talented, organized general contractor and construction management team.

Efficient, cost saving buildings are the future and PPS' standard for remodeled buildings is LEED Silver, as recognized by the U.S. Green Building rating system. The Benson Tech modernization project has already surpassed LEED Silver and is now certified as LEED Gold Status. At last report, the project was in process for acceptance at LEED Platinum Status.

The facility was officially handed over to the PPS, with teachers back on site, on August 21, 2024. Students were on site for the first day of attendance on August 27, 2024.

Modern elements incorporated into the design were increased energy efficiency, with refurbished and new windows, modern HVAC equipment, including a hydronic heating and cooling system. There was extensive use of solar panels around the site, providing potentially 314 MWh of renewable energy for the campus. Another design element was the use of acoustic floor slabs or sound-dampening floor systems in the new Buildings C and H. The acoustic floor slabs are composed of plywood and foam panels and concrete, which combine to elimi-

nate noise from below or above the CTE shops and classrooms. The majority of the equipment for the CTE shops and health occupation classes are brand new, including six state-of-the-art dental chairs and two X-ray machines from ADEC. There is a large covered bike parking structure in the center of the East Courtyard between Buildings C and H that accommodates 200 secure bike parking locations. The roof surface of the structure supports an extensive bank of solar panels. There is an outdoor teaching space with two white board panels, located west of the bike parking structure.

All of the original structures, incorporated into the new design, received complete seismic upgrades. All on-site facilities were designed to meet current seismic standards. More than 30 contractors were involved in the project. PPS had an Office of School Modernization (OSM) staff of six providing project oversight of the work. On any given day, there were as many as 250 construction staff on site. Interesting to note, there were approximately 35 to 40 Benson Tech alumni employed by various contractors who actually worked on the site.

Many original components and materials from the school were salvaged and re-purposed into the new facility. The flooring from the Old Gym was used for seating surfaces on the new Learning Stairs in Buildings F and H, as well as wainscoting along the walls of the upper level track in G1. Learning Stairs are located in the common space in Building F and at the east end of the automotive shops in Building H. Old-growth timber beams were

(story continues on next page)



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Photo 3: The completed restoration of the Old Gym with new court floor and upper running track. The gym is now designated as G1. **Photo 4:** Existing gymnasium flooring with Benson Tech gear logo re-purposed to create the seating surfaces for the Learning Stairs located in the Building F common space. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

re-purposed from the old shop building structures and converted into benches located throughout the facility.

As noted in previous updates, the sand mix Mueller machine is still operational and is set up in the foundry, located in new Building D. The large industrial Bridgeport lathe from the old senior machine shop is set up and operational in the new senior manufacturing shop, also located in Building D. Additional items salvaged and displayed are one of the original boiler doors, the historical school safe vault door, and the motorized drone airplane and the jet engine “cut-away” display. These items are exhibited as decorative museum pieces throughout the school: the boiler door is at the bottom of the staircase, into the lower level of the auditorium; the vault safe door is on a wall in the main office; the drone hangs high above the SW corner in the Building F Common Space; and the jet engine “cut away” is to be located in a corridor outside the automotive shops in Building H.

In summary, this project is something everyone can be proud of, the new Benson Polytechnic High School is truly an incredible accomplishment for the future of the School. I am very grateful and proud of the opportunity provided to me, during the course of the project, to witness this amazing chapter in the history of Benson Tech. The excellence of Simon Benson’s gift and foresight in supporting education will continue for future generations.

My thanks to Dan Malone/Benson Polytechnic High School, vice principal of Construction and Mark Kline/PPS-Turner & Townsend-Heery construction manager for my two final site tours on August 7 and 13, 2024.

GENERAL PROJECT RECAP, 2021-2024

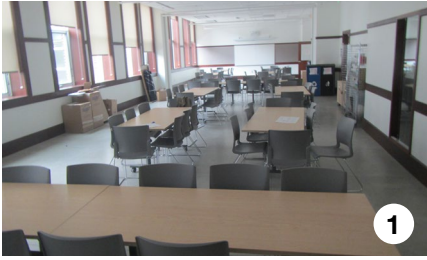
June 2021: Student body goes off site and process of relocating programs to the interim campus at the former Marshall High School facility is engaged.

August 7, 2021: Official groundbreaking ceremony held with PPS representatives and Benson Tech alumni in attendance.

Aug. 8, 2021: Contractor established control of the site – property fenced off and crews continued the investigation/preparation for structures disassembly, identifying any potential hazards for the demolition work. Materials tested and identified for proper handling and abatement of hazardous materials on site. Demolition begins soon afterward and continues through the 2021/2022 construction season.

August 2022 to August 2023: East hallway, the library, auto shop structures and old building wings “C” and “E” demolished. Seismic upgrades begin and continue into 2024. New Buildings C and H under construction. Work commenced on required upgrades and improvements to all utilities required in servicing the site, including water, electrical, storm and sanitary sewers. Work continued with removal and restoration of most of the original windows.

August 2023 to August 2024: Seismic upgrades in all buildings and major improvements to all original buildings completed, as well as construction of the new buildings. Items delivered and installed on site were the remaining restored windows, the original manufacturing equipment salvaged for reuse, new furniture, and CTE shop and health occupations equipment.



NOTABLE IMPROVEMENTS

BUILDING A – The auditorium windows were refurbished and a state-of-the-art audio visual and sound system was installed with a control board on the south side of the stage curtain and a large console in the middle of the auditorium floor. There is a new Alumni Room on the second floor and the original chandeliers were restored beautifully and hang from the ceiling. There are new seats installed throughout and the top row of original wooden seats were restored and replaced. There is a new elevator and additional bathrooms in the lower area. They will be available for student body activities and public use of the facility will be available through PPS.

BUILDING B – Building B is all new construction and will house the library, counselors' offices, band room, and classrooms. Building B also contains one of the four new campus elevators.

BUILDING C – All brand-new, two-story structure adjacent to Building B on the west end and continues the length along Irving Street to its easterly connection with Building D, the old Foundry Building. Building C will house chemistry labs, manufacturing shops,

construction shops, and classrooms as well as one of the four new elevators.

BUILDING D – The original Foundry Building has been upgraded and refurbished with a mix of mainly new and some old equipment for the pattern shop, foundry, senior manufacturing, and the sophomore and senior electrical shops.

BUILDING E – The original school building will house the administration offices, classrooms and the OHSU Health Center. The main foyer is refurbished and has a new “vestibule security entrance enclosure” for campus safety. Restoration of the original wooden staircase banisters and wood trim is complete, with new wall paint.

BUILDING F – All new construction and houses the great common space, cafeteria, kitchen facilities, digital café, new robotics room and Learning Stairs. The common space adjoins the outdoor atrium and provides additional space for the cafeteria or student gatherings.

BUILDING G1 – Former “Old Gym” and has new classrooms and concession stand in place. One of the four new on-

site elevators is in the hallway between Buildings G1 and G2.

BUILDING G2 – Former “New Gym” and has a new roof, new floor, new lighting and ceiling fans as well as automated bleachers for sporting events. The building includes a new weight room, new wrestling room, and new men’s and women’s locker rooms. There is also a designated seasonal team locker room.

BUILDING H – All new structure that houses the automotive shops, various classrooms, hydronic heating boilers, chilling equipment and the main electrical distribution room. The backup generator for the campus is located outside Building H, near the radio tower. The chiller room houses three chiller units and the boiler room has five boilers. The radio tower received seismic upgrades and has been repainted.

BUILDING I – The radio station building has received renovation improvements, including new radio broadcasting components. There is a new, enlarged recording studio and a multi-use editing space for photos, audio and film.



Photo 1: New community room for variety of gatherings at Benson Tech. **Photo 2:** The Learning Stairs in Building F Grand Common Space, temporarily supporting scaffolding for installation of overhead work. **Photo 3:** Re-purposed old growth timber beams were converted into benches for placement in the school corridors. **Photo 4:** Mass plywood sheets installed on the roof with hurricane straps and metal beam framework for seismic restraint. **Photo 5:** Main piping for the hydronic piping system is stubbed up inside Building H for connection to the future hydronic heat transfer unit. **Photo 6:** Solar panels installed above the outdoor observation deck on the south side of Building H. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs)

DESIGN ADVISORY GROUP (DAG) MEMBERS

- Curtis Wilson Jr., Principal
- Paul Anthony, Board of Education
- Roi San Anderson
- Brian Gerber
- Amy Henry
- Tammy Hite
- Luke Hotchkiss
- Dave Ketah
- Bryan Smith
- Amy Sutton
- Christina Thompson
- Todd Williams
- Dale Bajema
- Rachel Browning
- Janice Choy-Weber
- Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D.
- Brent Dahl
- Angel Dawson
- Jeanetter DeCastro
- Wendy Farber
- Reuben Gilmore
- Susan Hargrave
- Rob Johns
- Peter Koonce
- Elizabeth O'Malley
- Glen Pak (Co-Chair)
- Matt Pellico
- Brian Unflat
- Drew Amrine
- Immacula Bixby
- Alan Campos
- Sophia Chin
- Hazel Curley O'Malley
- Henry Kirkpatrick
- James Littrell
- Kailey Malynowski (Co-Chair)
- Kimanh Nguyen
- Adrian Sanchez-Hernandez
- Arlette Torres
- Daviar Wexler

PUBLIC

- Paul J. Peters, Alliance, School Social Worker
- Amy Acquino, Alliance Teacher
- Kelli Mitchell, Alliance
- Nathaniel D. Edmunds, Alliance
- Parker McCollson, PPS Student
- Griffin Jackson, PPS Student
- William Horner, PPS Student
- Andrea Darke, PPS Student
- Carmen Brown, PPS Student

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- Lorne McConachie, Bassetti Architects
- Joe Echeverri, Bassetti Architects
- Aydin Eهران, Bassetti Architects
- Holly Grosvenor, Bassetti Architects
- Dianna Montzka, Bassetti Architects:



Benson Tech Modernization Project design visualizations prepared by Bassetti Architects.

MASTER PLANNING COMMITTEE (MPC) MEMBERS

- Paul Anthony, School Board Representative, Benson Parent
- Dale Bajema, Alumni, Benson Boosters, Benson Site Council
- Maya Brown, Benson Student
- Ilsa Bruer, Benson Teacher
- Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D., Benson Alumni, Business Association, Higher Ed/Business for STEM
- Angel Dawson, Benson Parent
- Michelle Fusak, Benson Parent
- Brian Gerber, Teacher, Benson Cluster Parent
- Reuben Gilmore, Benson Parent, Alumni
- Tammy Hite, Teacher, Alumni, Partners
- Angela Jarvis Holland, Benson Parent, Students of All Abilities
- Luke Hotchkiss, Benson Teacher, Alumni
- Eric Huth, Benson Alumni
- JaNae Jamison, Benson Teacher
- Rob Johns, Alumni, Business Association, Legacy Graduate
- K. Nicole Kennedy, Benson Teacher, Alumni
- Dave Ketah, Benson Cluster Parent, Neighborhood Association, Parent
- Jacob M. Masters, Benson Student
- Irina Phillips, Neighborhood Association, Benson Parent
- Jim Piro, Alumni, Industry
- Ed Railey, Benson Teacher
- Christina Ram, Benson Alumni
- Leigh Anne Scherer, Benson PTSA
- James Tompkins, Benson Student
- Julie Tonroy, Business Association, Partners
- Matt Pellico, Benson Teacher
- Bryan Smith, Benson Teacher
- Richard (Dick) Spies, Alumni, Partner
- Lisa White, Benson Parent, Boosters
- Curtis Wilson, Jr., Benson Principal
- Rebecca Zich, Benson Student

Alumni Scholarship awarded to four graduates of the Class of 2024

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 four Benson Tech class of 2024 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.

The 2024 Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship awardees:

Myah Marina Macias Pérez was born in Hermiston, OR. A first-generation Chicana, Myah is the youngest of four siblings. She spent her early life in Hermiston, and moved to Las Vegas with her dad and brother while in middle school. Myah spent her first three years of high school in Nevada, transferring to Benson Tech in 2023 when—facing housing insecurity—she moved to Portland to live with her sister.

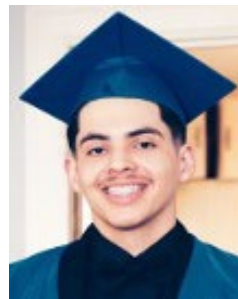


While in Las Vegas, Myah worked alongside her dad in his landscaping business. Seeing her family and other migrants tend to the lands of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla people helped her to appreciate how their hard work provides food for those in their community, and people nation-

wide. This experience also reinforced her commitment to, and passion for, environmental stewardship.

Naturally curious, Myah loves to read, make art, and explore Portland's many parks with her dog, Lexus. Myah will attend PCC this fall, where she plans to obtain her AAOT (Oregon Transfer Degree). While at PCC, Myah is excited to participate in Carpe Mundi, a local mentorship program that will help facilitate and fund a semester studying abroad in Guatemala. After PCC, Myah hopes to transfer to the University of Oregon to study landscape architecture, where she would like to focus on designing beautiful, long-lasting, and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

Christopher “Chris” Diaz was raised in Southern California. He attended six different schools before moving to Portland with his mom and siblings when he was 16. Chris began his junior year at Benson Tech, and initially struggled to acclimate to the new environment, programs, and people. His teachers made an effort to connect with and support him, and Chris credits them not only with helping him navigate the transition to a new school, but for motivating him as well: Chris's cumulative GPA while at Benson Tech was a 3.37, nearly a full point higher than it had been at his previous more traditional high school.



Chris was drawn to both automotive and manufacturing, eventually opting to major in the latter. He thrived in the class, mastering technical skills, including welding, use of lathes and other equipment, and understanding the properties and applications of different metals. Chris highlighted the importance of the soft skills he learned in his vocational classes as well, notably how to work safely in potentially dangerous environments, and how to collaborate with others to plan and successfully execute a multi-step project.

This fall, Chris will enroll in PCC, where he will pursue his Associates of Science Oregon Transfer degree in Computer Science (ASOT-CS), after which he plans to transfer to a four-year university to obtain a bachelor's—and potentially a master's—degree in CS. Having been inspired by his success at the school, Chris's younger siblings hope to follow in his footsteps and attend Benson Tech.

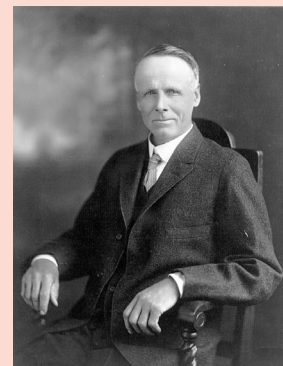
Kasch Brigham-Saunders, Health Occupations major. Attending Southwestern Oregon Community College to study Health Sciences. Kasch graduated with a cumulative 3.5 GPA, including a perfect 4.0 both semesters of his junior year. While at Benson Tech, Kasch was active in AVID and CommuniCare.

Hung Le, Automotive major. Attending PCC to study Mechanical Engineering. Hung immigrated to the U.S. from Vietnam at age 12. A stand-out student, Hung finished high school with a 3.85 GPA, earning straight As continuously from spring term of his sophomore year through graduation. Hung participated in the Asian Culture Club while at Benson Tech, and serves as an interpreter for his parents and extended family as well.

Inspired to help? You can securely donate online to the scholarship fund on the BPHSAA website at bensontechalumni.org/sections/scholarship/.

BPHSAA TRiViA QUIZ

During his lifetime, Simon Benson became known as “The First Citizen of Oregon” for his generous philanthropy. The innovations and impact of Mr. Benson continue to be visible far beyond the new buildings of Benson Polytechnic High School. Read on for some reminders.



- **Question 1:** When did the Benson Bubblers begin appearing in Portland?
- **Question 2:** Was the concept of student debt an innovation of Mr. Benson's?
- **Question 3:** Who were the descendants of Mr. Benson?
- **Question 4:** What became of the Benson family's Portland residence??
- **Question 5:** Where is Mr. Benson buried?

- **Answer 1:** The proposal to install 20 fountains in the downtown area of Portland was made in April 1912, along with a donation of \$10,000 to make it happen. At that time Portland had been enjoying the pure and abundant Bull Run water for 17 years. The iconic four bowl Bubblers were and are a recognition of pride in this water system, and proclaim Benson's views on sobriety and citizenship. In 1975 the foundry and machine shops at Benson Tech began making replacement parts and additional Bubblers for the use of thirsty citizens.
- **Answer 2:** Perhaps it was. The idea for student loans came to Mr. Benson as a way to help Benson Tech students facing tough times to complete their studies. This problem was quickly recognized, and in 1921 a deposit of \$10,000 was made available that students could draw up to \$25 per month to meet their needs. These loans would come due with interest after graduation when the training received produced offers of employment. The interest from the loans, and those that accrued from the principal deposit funded the Simon Benson Scholarship, which is still awarded to graduates of Benson Tech.
- **Answer 3:** Simon Benson had three different wives, with whom he had five children.
 - » His first marriage took place in Wisconsin to Ester Searle when he was 24 in 1876. Their children were Amos, Alice, and Caroline. Ester died of tuberculosis at Colfax, WA, in 1891 after a lengthy illness. Amos also had three wives and fathered nine children. Alice had two children in two marriages, and Caroline had a single son with her only husband.
 - » There were two sons from Simon's marriage to Pamela Loomis in 1894 back in Wisconsin. Gilbert Theron Benson was the oldest but died at the age of 31 in 1928. His brother Chester Simon Benson lived to be 68 and was survived by his wife, and their son and daughter.
 - » Harriet King married Simon in Hood River, OR in 1920
- **Answer 4:** The house was built in 1900 on the corner of SW 11th and Clay, across the street to the west of The Old Church. It is roughly a rectangular, 2½-story building, with

basement, measuring about 30x56 feet. It is a showcase for the types of lumber available in Pacific NW forests, serving both structural and decorative roles in the Queen Anne style. There were three first floor porches and a second-story balcony. The porch to the main entrance wrapped around to the side of the house, prominently displaying the corner window's curved, 90-degree bend. Son Chester was born there in 1902.

In spite of the house's amenities however, by 1913 it no longer served the interests of the family members. Once they had moved away, it became a rental property, a boarding house, and was reconfigured into apartments. Maintenance declined and even registration as a National Historic Place in 1983 did not halt the deterioration that brought a City of Portland condemnation in 1991.

The threat of demolition eventually unified the Friends of the Simon Benson House, which in January 2000 facilitated the move of the house three blocks away to the Portland State University campus. Once there, restoration got underway. The house and its parts were inspected, repaired or replaced in kind as needed. Upgrades to current building codes and changes that have re-purposed the house took nearly a year to create an historical, distinctive, and functional office and conference space for the university.

- **Answer 5:** Simon Benson (1851-1942) died in Beverly Hills CA, and is buried in Section 8 of Portland's Riverview Cemetery. He is joined there by his wife, Ester Searle (1860-1876), and 10 family members:
 - » Sons Amos Benson (1877-1944), Gilbert Theron Benson (1896-1928), and Chester Benson (1902-1971).
 - » Daughter Alice (1881-1976), her husband Patrick Allen (1888-1923), and their son G. Benson Allen (1911-1983). Bernice A. Allen (1912-1994) was the widow of G. Benson Allen.
 - » Amos' daughter Ester M. (1903-1978) shares a marker with her husband Ernest Polen (1901-1985).
 - » Chester is buried between his wife Dorothy Logan (1904-1979) and his brother Gilbert Theron.

Benson TechBoosters gear up for newly renovated campus

By Kelly Janes, Benson TechBoosters, President

The start of a new school year always brings a sense of excitement and fresh possibilities. This year, that feeling is especially strong as Benson Tech returns to its beautifully renovated home campus and the Benson TechBoosters are ready to make the most of it! Our team started preparing at the end of the 2023-2024 school year by rewriting our bylaws and electing a new slate of directors:

- President: Kelly Janes
- Vice President: Rachel McDonald
- Recording Secretary: Ginny Janes
- Treasurer: Lonnie Bowden (Class of 1996)

We will consider electing up to three At Large Directors for this school year at our September 19 meeting (details at bensontechboosters.org) – please join us if you are interested!

First Week of School Teacher Appreciation: We love Benson Tech's teachers, staff, and administration. We stocked up on a variety of snacks, drinks, and general supplies for the new faculty lounge.

Celebrating 50 Years of Women at Benson Tech: Last school year marked 50 years of women at Benson Tech. To honor this milestone, a current student will present a plaque to the first women to attend Benson Tech at next month's spirit assembly on October 18. We hope this presentation will inspire current Astros and give them a sense of the strength and longevity of the Benson Tech community. The plaque will serve as a symbol of appreciation and recognition for the first girls' groundbreaking experiences. Planning this celebration has been a collaborative effort between the TechBoosters and the BPHSAA.

Upcoming Events /Fundraising Efforts

Fundraising is the name of our game, and we have several initiatives – some new, some returning – in the works for this school year!

Fundraising, Recruitment, and Spirit Gear Sales at the Grand Opening on

September 14: We are gearing up to showcase Benson TechBoosters at the upcoming grand opening. We invite alumni, current families, and the Benson Tech community to stop by our table, say hello, and explore opportunities to get involved. In addition to recruiting new members, we will be launching our fall fundraiser, "Ready! Set! Go Astros!", and selling Benson Tech Spirit gear, including T-shirts and hoodies, to further support our endeavors.

Grieg Lodge of the Sons of Norway Pancake Breakfast on October 13: We are reconnecting with the Sons of Norway now that we are neighbors once again. Come enjoy all-you-can-eat pancakes, sausage links, fruit, scrambled eggs, orange juice, and coffee or tea for \$10 (adults) or \$6 (children 3-10). Kids under 3 eat free! 20% of all proceeds will go to the TechBoosters general fund. Sunday, October 13, 8:30 am-12:00 pm at the Norse Hall, 111 NE 11th Ave. Please enter through the door on the Couch Street side of the hall, closest to the parking lot.

Concessions and Spirit Gear Sales at Sporting Events: Jeff Strachan (Class of 1977) continues to manage and operate our concessions program – now with a shiny new concession stand! Volunteering for concessions gives Benson Tech sports teams and student groups the opportunity to raise funds for use throughout the school year.

Fundraising for Frosh Football: Freshman football is back! Coach Lewis has indicated a need for funds to cover team equipment. Consider donating via [BensonTechBoosters on Paypal](http://BensonTechBoosters.org).

Engaging with Local Representatives: It's essential for us to have a voice in our community and advocate for Benson Tech's needs of Benson Tech. That's why Oregon House Rep. Rob Nosse will be joining us again at a fall TechBoosters meeting. We encourage everyone to join us, and meeting details can be found on our website.

To support our efforts, you can donate at Paypal today. Simply use the drop-down

menu to choose how you'd like your donation to be used.

Benson TechBoosters believe that together, we can make a difference. There are countless ways to get involved and contribute to student success. Find us online BensonTechBoosters.org. We are also on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/BensonPolytechnicHighSchoolStudentsAlumniCommunity) at: [Benson Polytechnic High School Students, Alumni & Community](https://www.facebook.com/BensonPolytechnicHighSchoolStudentsAlumniCommunity) and on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/BensonTechBoosters) at: [Benson TechBoosters](https://www.instagram.com/BensonTechBoosters).

Thank you for all that you do and Go Astros!!

Benson Tech Astros, continued from front cover

and alumni. Astros in particular is most representative of one of Benson's most important values. Due to their associations with astronauts, Astros is analogous with innovation and forward thinking."

This past spring, a design company – with substantial input from Benson Tech students and staff – created a collection of images to depict the Benson Tech's Astronaut. The nickname and images have since been approved by the PPS and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA). As the 2024-25 school year begins, these designs will be used on uniforms, school documents, hoodies, hats, mugs, decals and other "gear" sold by student groups, the Benson Tech Boosters, BPHSAA, and others.

While recognizing and honoring the Techmen and Techsters' many and great achievements over the decades, Benson Polytechnic High School now is adventuring into the 21st century as the BENSON TECH ASTROS!!!!