

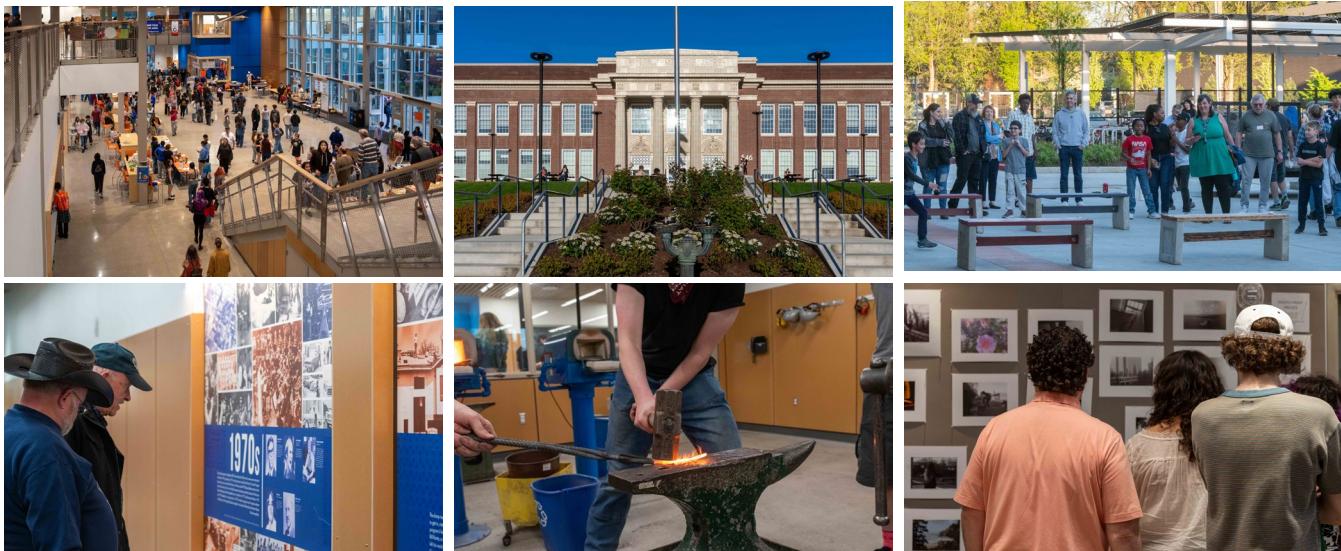


BENSON TECH

ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), January 2026 Edition



Above: Scenes from Tech Show 2025, held on Benson Tech's modernized campus. (Photos courtesy of Portland Public Schools/Beth Conyers.)

We all love Tech Show — April 16 and 17

by Dale Bajema (Class of 1954) and Rob Johns (Class of 1977)

Mark your calendars — Benson Tech's 103rd Tech Show is coming up on April 16 and 17, 2026, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM. The BPHSAA will be welcoming all alumni and their family and friends in the new Alumni Room and adjoining stairwell areas.

The Alumni Room itself is on the second floor behind the auditorium's balcony. Though there is access from Benson Tech's main front door; the easiest route is through the ground-level door inside of the northwest wing of the school. There is also an elevator available.

While meeting with classmates and other alumni, plus enjoying some refreshments (cake and coffee), there will be a few special things to see. One can browse through year books from the past 80 years. And a new investment made by the BPHSAA is the digitization of old Tech Pep newsletters available for viewing at Tech Show and online for paid alumni members. The Alumni Room itself has a growing trove of memorabilia.

As always, the 2026 Tech Show will have current students busy "showing off their stuff" in the modernized shops, the back courtyard and other technical education

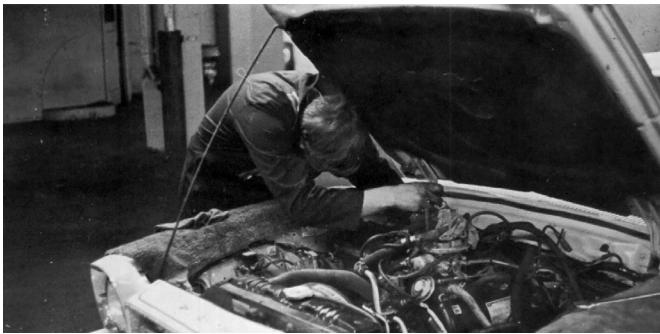
space. Food and drink will be available in The Commons. Also in The Commons, "official" Benson Tech Astros clothing and other gear will be on sale. Benson Tech clubs and activities will have students at tables throughout the school, offering food, drink and student-produced products.

It will be a great evening at Tech Show with the excitement of the students showing what they're learning and your own experience from when you were a student and enjoyment at your Tech Shows. Come and see our great school for that shared experience. BPHSAA Board members will be available in the Alumni Room to talk and learn more of our work to continue supporting Benson Polytechnic High School. See you at Tech Show!



Invitation to former BATS: The BATS club is considering a special "behind the scenes" of Benson Tech's new audio-visual equipment, auditorium, etc., each night of Tech Show.

For times and details, check bensontechalumni.org starting in March.



Vision for Benson Tech's Automotive Program

by Taylor Casteline, Benson Tech CTE Instructor - Automotive

My journey in automotive technology began in Tampa, Florida, where I attended a high school technical program similar to Benson Polytechnic. That early education led to a 14-year career spanning every facet of the industry, from the parts counter to service manager. My most extensive technical experience came in the heavy diesel field, specializing in fire truck maintenance and repair. When my hobby for racing and my experience in working as a mechanic collided it led to a career in the motorsports world through racing and working with racing teams. As a woman in a male-dominated field, I faced challenges that required resilience and determination, experiences that deepened my commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment where all students feel welcomed and supported. This diverse background, from heavy diesel to high-performance motorsports, has given me comprehensive knowledge of both technical skills and professional competencies, and now I'm committed to passing that enthusiasm on to the next generation of automotive professionals.

My vision for the Benson automotive program centers on developing employability skills and workplace readiness above all else. While students will learn foundational automotive concepts and work toward entry-level ASE certification, my primary focus is teaching a great foundation for automotive skills the industry is looking for. My goal is that by the end of JR year all my students would be capable of working an entry level job in the lube lanes

of our local repair shops. Along with the entry level certifications through ASE I have developed partnerships with both Ford and Toyota and students have the ability to obtain certifications within each respective company which the students will carry throughout their career. My other goal is to continue to work with our great partners in the Portland area and develop some curriculum around the ever evolving world of alternative energy powered vehicles starting with Electric Vehicles. Hopefully with all the great work all of us have been a part of in modernizing the Benson Tech automotive program we can become an ASE accredited automotive program.

Equally important to my vision is creating an inclusive program that serves students with varied goals and interests. While many students will pursue automotive careers, I recognize that others are exploring their options or seeking practical skills for personal enrichment. For these students, the program offers an opportunity to develop automotive knowledge as a valuable hobby and a reliable fallback career option. My commitment is to provide every student with a positive, supportive learning experience that builds confidence, fosters curiosity, and opens pathways—whether they're heading to a dealership, planning to work on their own vehicles, or simply discovering capabilities they never knew they had. Success in my program isn't measured solely by career placement, but by the lasting skills, memories, and sense of accomplishment that every student takes with them.

Benson Tech Foundation fills a "gap" in auto program funding

by Dale Bajema (Class of 1954) and Rob Johns (Class of 1977)

As Benson Tech's Automotive Program shifts its focus for its majors to be truly prepared to enter the workforce, a large number of new tools needed to be quickly acquired (see Taylor Casteline's article on Page 2). Instead of a mere assortment of tools found in an automotive shop, professional intermediate and advanced tools sets were needed to allow up to six groups of students to work at the same time. (The advanced tool sets include specialty tools with insulated handles to permit work on high-voltage electrical vehicles [EVs].)

Automotive majors will now increasingly focus on skills necessary to take and pass the ASE (American Service Excellence) Certification Program for Automotive entry level test. The sets to revamp the program were estimated to cost \$28,000 if the purchase could be made by the end of the year before prices go up as expected in 2026. The District agreed to provide \$12,000 and Benson Tech had about \$7,000 that it could contribute, leaving a shortfall of \$9,000.

The Benson Tech Foundation (BTF) stepped up on short notice with the

needed money and the purchase was made. BTF, founded in 2012, is a 501c3 organization dedicated to supporting Benson Tech CTE programs and activities. As a rule, the Foundation provides funds to fill in "gaps" in established programs like this refocusing of the Automotive Program or the unexpected needs of the Robotics Club.

For information on how to donate to the Benson Tech Foundation, call or email Rob Johns 503-314-0041 or robjohns@comcast.net.

Benson Tech Community Celebration

On September 13, several hundred Benson Tech alumni, current students and teachers, along with incoming freshmen students and their parents, "celebrated" the beginning of the Benson Tech 2025-2026 school year at the annual Community Celebration. Last year's Celebration, which was sponsored by the BPHSAA in partnership with the Benson Tech Boosters and the school's administration, is a reimaged take on the BPHSAA's long running end-of-summer Community Picnic.

The 2025 event took place in the school's commons (see photo at right), with lunch available for purchase from food trucks that were conveniently located in the nearby horseshoe courtyard. Inside the commons an activity fair featured several Benson Tech clubs and athletic teams as well as the Benson Tech Boosters and BPHSAA representatives. Official Benson Tech Astros clothing and gear was on sale as well.

The Classes of 1985, 1995, and 2005 (see reunion wrap-up article on Page 13) each held one of their respective reunion events during the Celebration, which gave their classmates the chance to tour the recently modernized school. Vice Principal of Modernization, Dan Malone, led a pre-arranged tour for the class of 1985, heralding them with his "insider's perspective" on the new facilities.



Plans are already underway for the 2026 Community Celebration. This year's event will return to its roots and be held on Saturday, August 22, 2026. The Celebration will again occur in the commons and offers incoming freshmen and their families an opportunity to connect with the Benson Tech Community before classes begin. The family-friendly gathering will also be open to all alumni interested in touring their alma mater. For local 7th and 8th graders considering their high school options, the August 22 event will provide a chance to visit Benson Tech and engage with the school's community.

For questions about the Community Celebration, or if you would like to include the event in an upcoming reunion, please contact BPHSAA Vice Chair Rachael LK Kurynny at RachaelKK@gmail.com.



Athletics updates for Fall 2025 and Winter 2025/ 2026

by *Jessica Russell, Benson Tech Athletic Director*

Fall Recap

Benson Tech had another historic fall season! The cross country teams had more students sign up this year than last, and the larger team committed to more weekend meets and offseason practices than in previous seasons. Sophomore Oshea Wolfkind ran the Astros' fastest time at the PIL district race at the end of October. Tech football continues to grow and develop, playing seven games against a mixture of freshmen and JV2 opponents. The plan is to play a full varsity schedule in the fall of 2026. Our boys soccer and girls volleyball programs also made history, winning more contests this season than they had in years past. The girls soccer program continued to play a JV and JV2 schedule with a record number of participants. Both soccer programs graduated a large number of seniors - ten for the boys and four in the girls program.

Winter Preview

The winter season is off to a great start for the Astros! The wrestling program, coached by Benson Tech alumnus Robert Caudillo, is back up and running. Coach has worked tirelessly to schedule them in tournaments nearly every weekend in addition to their competitive league meets. Wednesday, December 14, we celebrated our two senior wrestlers, Triston Behrens and Alexander Garcia. The swim team is also steadily building and improving. Benson Tech educator Steve Espe is our returning head coach, drumming up more participation and commitment from his team every season. Boys and girls basketball both represented Benson Tech well in their non league and winter break tournaments. Boys basketball are

ranked 19th in the state with only three losses so far this season as we move into league play. Standout freshman Kendall Hopkins-McGlothen just completed his tenth consecutive game scoring double-digits. Girls basketball is ranked sixth in state with their only two losses to nationally ranked teams from California.



A Look Into the Benson Football Program

Coach Kendall Lewis discusses the revival of Benson Football, with freshmen and sophomore numbers up after a long break.

by Isla Faria, Benson Orbit Staff



Above: Watch the interview with Coach Kendall Lewis from the original Orbit article on [YouTube](#).

Coach Kendall Lewis of the Benson's football team explains why football stopped for a long six years due to safety concerns and numbering issues. This is his second year coaching and slowly growing the team from the ground up due to the long cause. "We started going back to the fundamentals," Lewis stated

Coach Lewis has brought the football team's numbers up a significant amount with freshmen and sophomores this year after the long break. Next year, they will implement a varsity team in addition to JV and JV2. "The school is excited, and of course, the players are excited to do the things they're getting ready to do, and having

Friday night lights is going to be exciting for the community," said Lewis

The football community is a family, along with the crowd and players' families. "Everything has to be family-oriented," he shows how tight-knit the team is, and that is the only way. "My wife comes, my two kids come, so it definitely has to be a family atmosphere, or this thing does not work. Whether we are winning or losing, we're playing together."

Family is Lewis's coaching philosophy. He cares about his players on and off the field. "My coaching philosophy is pretty much just to help these kids grow not just as players but also as community members, making sure that they stay with their grades, making sure they respect everyone in the community, making sure that they go off somewhere, and also come back here and help raise the future generations." This quote speaks volumes about what kind of coach Lewis is and how he teaches. Lewis takes it very seriously while still making sure they have fun and stay passionate. He is building the program back up to be a family-oriented community with growth, passion, hard work, and teamwork. "There are lessons when you win, there are lessons when you lose, and as long as we're understanding those lessons, growing as a team, and doing the small things that count, they won't even matter."

The Orbit becomes monthly publication

Benson Tech students' online newspaper is now published monthly. Started last year, the newspaper features timely and interesting student-written articles about current school news and events, interviews, and commentary (see the interview with Tech's football coach reprinted above). As the year progresses, the staff is considering occasional printed issues because there is evidence that print media is an important part of maintaining healthy literacy in an individual

and society. *[Editor's note: From the evidence so far, The Orbit is becoming the 21st century's replacement of the 20th century's "Tech Pep."]*

To support Benson Tech's student journalists and receive a printed copy of Orbit, visit the Orbit Subscriptions page at SchoolPay to subscribe to the publication (<https://pps.schoolpay.com/pay/for/Orbit-Subscriptions--Journalism/SdruMrh>).

Benson Tech 2025-2026 enrollment up

by Dale Bajema (Class of 1954)

With two successive freshmen classes of over 325, Benson Tech's enrollment has steadily been increasing since returning to the modernized school building in 2024. In each of those two years, Portland Public Schools (PPS) has allowed up to 335 freshmen to enter Benson Tech. Unfortunately, not all students offered an opportunity register to attend the school. Thus, the actual fall enrollment is somewhat less despite Benson Tech's administrative staff's best efforts to fill all of "the slots." Accordingly, enrollment on December 10, 2025 was about 1,000 compared to about 850 during the last year on the Marshall Campus. By class: Freshmen - 321; Sophomores - 298; Juniors - 197; Seniors - 188.

For this 2025-2026 school year, PPS faced a \$50 million drop in state funds that forced it to cut staff and other resources in all of its 80+ schools. While Benson Tech incurred some resource reductions, the enrollment growth allowed the school to increase its teachers by six. This allowed creating additional sections in state-required classes such as English, science, and math, but no additional Career Technical Education (CTE) programs as many alumni had hoped for. (Almost every other PPS school had to cut teachers and/or staff.)

Looking ahead, PPS will allow 335 freshmen to enter Benson Tech next fall for the 2026-2027 school year. Over 1,000 interested students and their parents/guardians came to Benson Tech on November 20 for 8th Grade Information Night. During the November-December 2025 period



to apply to attend Benson Tech, more than 600 eighth graders for the 2026-27 school year in fact did. Letters of acceptance, typically, will be sent out this month with instructions to actually register for classes at Benson Tech during Forecasting.

The 2026-2027 school year will be the third year with classes with an entering class of about 330 freshmen. As the current smaller senior and junior classes are replaced by the recent larger ones, Benson Tech's enrollment is expected to approach 1,100 students

On a less optimistic note, while Benson Tech's enrollment may grow next year, staff and other resources may not. PPS is again experiencing reductions in state funding and will have a budget gap of about \$46 million. The District has informed all of its school principals that there will be cuts in the coming school year. Benson Tech will not know until this February or March what its share of the cuts will be despite the expected larger 2026-2027 enrollment.

Benson Tech band continues to grow

by Dale Bajema (Class of 1954) and Josh Piper (Class of 1995)

As the school year continues, a small Benson Tech Band is coming together within the Benson Music Club. At this time, there is a core group of around 15-20 musicians. They meet after school once-a-week to rehearse under the direction of volunteer, Dan Foster (Class of 1975) and staff advisor, Heide Goertzen. Several additional Benson Tech staff have participated, including Laura Arias (percussion), Jesse Yeager (trombone), and Jacob Patterson (guitar, Class of 2006).

The band gave its maiden performance just before winter break in the Commons, playing a short set of pep band and holiday music. Arrangements are being made

for the band to play at a few of this season's basketball games and perhaps at other school events later in the year.

Principal Curtis Wilson has hopes of hiring a music teacher next school year. However, with district budget cuts looming, the Benson Tech Music Club may have to continue to be outlet for Benson Tech musicians for a while longer. Community support for the program has been vital, providing a number of instruments and supplies. If you would like to support the club contact Heide Goertzen at hgoertzen@pps.net or donate online at <https://schoolpay.com/pay/for/Benson-Band-/SeEDqzH>.

Benson Tech campus modernization project receives professional recognition

by Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977)

The Benson Polytechnic High School Modernization Project has been recognized by Restore Oregon and received a distinguished DeMuro Award at the Restoration Celebration Party, held on October, 24t, 2025 at The Redd Event Center.



Above: Lydia Burns of Bassetti Architects receives the DeMuro Award for the Benson Tech Modernization Project.

The DeMuro Awards are presented for Excellence in Historic Preservation, the state's highest honor for the preservation, reuse, and revitalization of architectural and cultural sites. There were nine DeMuro Awards presented this year,

which was a record number of project nominations. The Benson Polytechnic High School Modernization Project was recognized for Adaptive Reuse. The project stands as a model for how historic schools can be revitalized with integrity, purpose and community at the heart.

The DeMuro Award recognized the entire project team and was presented to Lydia Burns/Bassetti Architects, Principal In Charge.

Editor's Note: Bassetti Architects' design had extensive input from the PPS appointed Design Advisory Group (DAG) made up of Benson Tech's alumni, faculty and administrators, students and parents, and other stakeholders many of who had advocated for years about modernizing the school and what that modernization might be.

What's on the BPHSAA webpage?

The BPHSAA website (bensontechalumni.org) is a "treasure trove" of current and past information about the Association and Benson Tech High School that is regularly updated, including

- Selected current news about Benson Tech, the BPHSAA and the Benson TechBoosters
- Recent newsletters and minutes of the BPHSAA's meetings plus 17+ years of past ones
- A list of the BPHSAA officers and directors as well as its bylaws
- Upcoming class reunions
- Calendar of BPHSAA meetings
- A directory of Benson Tech alumni-owned businesses
- Access to the digitized Tech Pep (Benson Tech's former school newspaper) via the "Members" section
- Links to The Orbit (Benson Tech's current school newspaper), the Benson TechBoosters, and the BPHSAA social media pages
- Obituaries of Benson Tech alumni via the "In Memoriam" section
- An easy link to join the BPHSAA and pay dues
- An easy link to donate to the Alumni Scholarship Fund



A SHOUT-OUT TO ROGER EDWARDS

In 2023, Roger Edwards (Class of 1963) proposed that the BPHSAA digitize all paper copies of the Tech Pep, the former Benson Tech student-written and -printed school newspaper from 1920 to 2010. The early issues were becoming increasingly fragile. Unfortunately, many of the later years had been inadvertently destroyed. Action needed to be taken.

Upon the BPHSAA's endorsement, Roger took it on himself to find a local company that could optically scan all of the surviving paper copies into a searchable database. He tracked down and conveyed the existing copies to the company, and largely financed the endeavor personally.

As a result, the BPHSAA and the school now have a digital archive for future enjoyment and reference. It will also stand as a tribute to the efforts of hundreds of Benson Tech's Print Shop students and the Tech Pep staff.

Roger, thank you very, very much!

Read more details about the Tech Pep digitization effort, including on how you can get access to the archive as a BPHSAA member, in the article "A historic pastime for alumni" (penned by Roger) on Page 12.

BPHSAA TRIVIA QUIZ

- **Question 1:** How did Benson Tech acquire a pipe organ?
- **Question 2:** Where was a pipe organ found for purchase?
- **Question 3:** What are the essential parts of a pipe organ?
- **Question 4:** Why was the organ moved to Cleveland High School?
- **Question 5:** What will become of this pipe organ?

- **Answer 1:** The buildings of Benson Tech were built over time. While classes were begun at the new school in September 1917, it was not until 1926 that a gymnasium was added, and the auditorium was not completed until 1931. Commerce High School was ready for its first students in September 1930. Its auditorium included space for a pipe organ, as was customary at the time for venues of that sort¹. In planning for the auditorium at Benson, Principal Charles Cleveland (1912-1946) made the promise that if pipe organ space was provided, the student body would acquire an instrument for the space².
- **Answer 2:** A very fine theater building was completed in Longview, WA in 1924. Its pipe organ would accompany the silent movies shown at the theater and be available for concerts as well. But taking movies began to be shown in 1927 and the Great Depression of 1929 reduced audiences at all movies. To save its investment, the Columbia Theater put its Kimball pipe organ up for sale. When new, it had cost \$30,000 and the theater accepted the offer of \$25,000 from Benson Tech in 1936³. Part of this money came from the student body fund that Principal Cleveland had organized for student donations, student body card sales, Tech Show proceeds, and sales at the Candy Stand⁴. The organ dedication ceremony at Benson Tech took place on April 3, 1937⁵.
- **Answers 3:** Organ-like instruments have been found far back in the rise of western civilization. While the workings have evolved with the advancement of technology, the basic parts are still pneumatic noisemakers and a way to arrange a sequence of sounds. A harmonica is also known as a mouth organ. A calliope works in a similar manner but uses steam instead of air flow to generate its powerful sounds. All pipe organs are unique; they are all custom built. Their features are largely dependent on the space available and the intentions of the buyer. A theater owner will prefer louder sounds and a variety of sound effects than a church organist, who would seek to produce resonant music over a wide range.



Franklin W. Butte (1933-1979), Class of 1951, pictured at left, and John Woodruff (1945-2005), Class of 1963, shown at right, were only two of undoubtedly many students influenced by the pipe organ in Benson Tech's auditorium. Formerly Chief of Staff at KBPS while at Benson Tech, Mr. Butte became a radio engineer and broadcaster. A lifelong pipe organ aficionado and



Kimball Organ Provides Musical Enrichment

Benson's auditorium houses one of Portland's largest pipe organs. It is a Kimball organ, and while it is not the largest in the country, it is one of the largest in Oregon. The Kimball pipe organ was purchased with city and student donations. The original \$25,000 that the city donated could have been used to purchase extra campus space or to build a new classroom, but the city chose to help pay for the organ.

The organ is used for various presentations and gatherings held in the Benson auditorium, as well as assemblies given at Benson schools. There are one hundred assemblies.

TOP LEFT: Sixth grade girls on busy with their Class School Improvement Project. TOP RIGHT: Benson High School MUSIC DEPARTMENT. FIRST ROW: Bob Brings (10), Don McDonald (10), Jimmie McAlister (11), Jerry Kest (11), Keith Dix (10), Dennis Dill (10), and Mark (10). SECOND ROW: Jimmie McAlister (11), Jerry Kest (11), Keith Dix (10), Dennis Dill (10), and Mark (10). THIRD ROW: Jimmie McAlister (11), Jerry Kest (11), Keith Dix (10), Dennis Dill (10), and Mark (10).

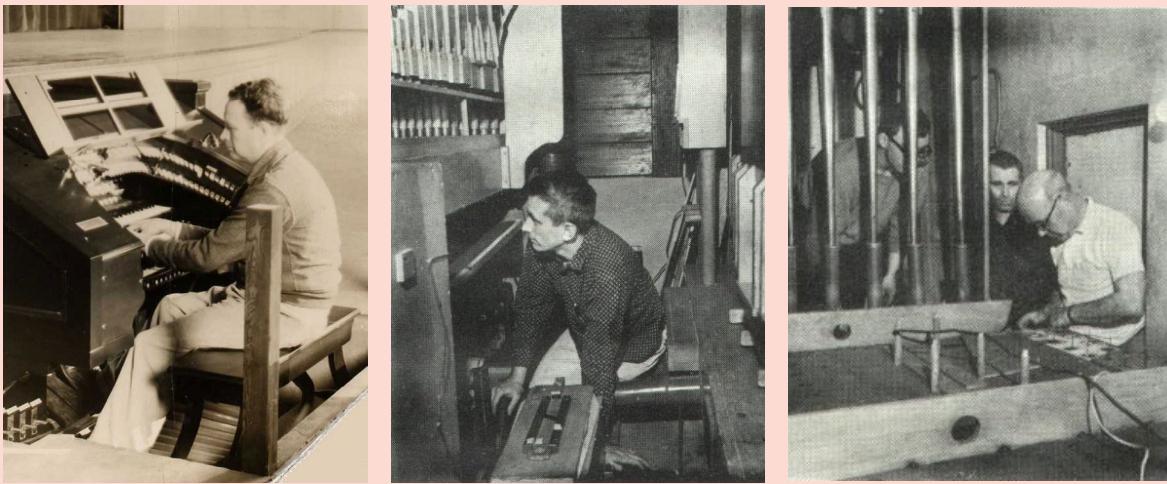
Both organ types have lots of pipes of all different sizes. Fitting them into a building can be problematic. They are arranged in chromatic order ranks, on air-tight boxes called wind chests. Typically, there are 61 pipes in a rank. Each wind chest can hold multiple ranks, and they contain pressurized air from an air blower mechanism. Pulling an organ stop allows air to flow to the particular pipe rank that the stop controls. Pressing one of the 61 keys on the organ keyboard causes a single pipe in the rank to sound, and it will continue to sound so long as the key is held down. In organ jargon, keyboards are called manuals. The foot pedals are referred to as the pedalboard, and it controls the sounding of the lower notes from the ranks⁶.

The pipes are contained in organ chambers. A pipe's length, diameter, shape, and what it is made of can all effect the sound it produces. Furthermore, they can be reed or flue pipes. Reed pipes are only open at their ends and have a metal tongue inside that vibrates in the air flow. They have a sharper, louder sound. Flue pipes have no moving parts and produce a softer sound from the air turbulence that occurs at their mouth, the lateral opening in their length that is commonly seen in visible pipe displays.

The sound effects of an organ come from its pipes or actual instruments called properties⁶. The Benson Tech organ had 15 properties, which included bird calls, sirens, chimes, a snare and a bass drum, a steamboat whistle, an even a way to make the sound of crashing waves⁷. It originally had 1077 pipes, and its console had three manuals, and a pedalboard with 32 pedals. There were additional pipes added during the organ's initial installation at Benson Tech². Each manual has a separate, and possibly unique set of stops to select the desired ranks for a performance, and additional controls to vary features of the sound⁸.

- **Answer 4** The move from Benson to Cleveland High School was chiefly due to Benson Principal Tom Parr (1987-1994)

performer, he was involved in multiple pipe organ restorations, including a 2/8 Wurlitzer organ he subsequently installed in three of his homes in Alaska over the years, as well as in a church. Mr. Woodruff, a former Benson Tech BATS member, became a computer consultant and a musician, as well as a self-employed pipe organ builder.



Left: Sandy Balcom of Balcom & Vaughn, the firm that installed Benson Tech's pipe organ, at the console. **Center:** Gerald Duffy led the 1970 effort to renovate Benson Tech's pipe organ. The renovation was based on a proposal presented to the PPS District by the Oregon chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society. **Right:** Bert Hedderly, Gerald Duffy and Bob Burke (left to right) working on the pipe organ renovation in 1970. (Photos courtesy of the Puget Sound Theatre Organ Society.)

- **Answers 4 (continued)**

having a lower appreciation of music than Principal Cleveland. In his first year at the Portland School of Trades, Principal Cleveland organized a school band, he arranged a student assembly at Benson Tech for a self-contained Hammond organ concert in October 1936⁹, and regularly scheduled assemblies of symphonic music.

In the planning for the 1990 remodeling at Benson Tech, Principal Parr chose more classroom space instead of spending an estimated \$30,000 for needed modifications of the organ chambers while allotting the monies available to the project. This decision did produce objections at the time¹⁰, but after consideration, the PPS School Board ruled that the move would not be a loss for the District. Cleveland High School was thrilled to have the instrument; there had been minimal use of the organ in the last five years at Benson Tech, and PPS had spent thousands of dollars for its maintenance. The Board also approved \$43,000 from District-wide funds to move and accommodate the organ in its new setting¹¹.

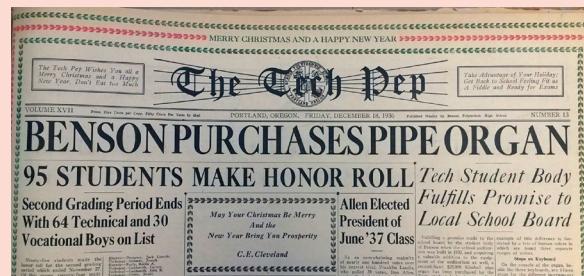
The organ has benefited at its new home. In 1994, it was adopted by the Columbia River Theater Organ Society (CRTOS), a non-profit organization whose members relish the opportunity to look after, play, and show off this organ and the Hollywood Theater organ that they also care for. More pipes have been added and periodic public performances have drawn appreciative audiences. In 2016, however, a burst steam pipe irreparably damaged some of the organ's wind chambers. A temporary fix for this calamity has substituted digital equivalents for its piping's original sounds¹².

- **Answer 5:** Because space for a pipe organ was not included in the planning for renovating Cleveland High School, the CRTOS is now engaged in the discussions about this Kimball pipe organ that could be made homeless. If renewing the design of the Cleveland auditorium is no longer feasible, then including organ chambers in the renovation at Jefferson High

School, which also has a performing arts focus, could be considered. PPS and the CRTOS hope to find an option sometime in the months after January to relocate the instrument. There are a few Portland high schools that have retained pipe chambers¹². Otherwise, it would seem that, like at the Columbia Theater years before, there will soon be a used organ for sale.

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BPHSAA OFFICERS

Chairperson	Rob Johns, Class of 1977
Vice Chairperson	Rachael LK. Kuryunny, Class of 1997
Secretary	MajBritt (Max) Baker, Class of 1990
Treasurer	Bob Trimble, Class of 1977

"GO-TO" PEOPLE

Web Page	Josh Piper
Tech Show	Rob Johns
Benson Community Celebration	Rachael LK Kuryunny
Class Reunions liaison	Rachael LK Kuryunny
"Historian"	Roger Edwards
Newsletter	Dale Bajema & Roger Edwards
Benson Business Directory	Thomas Smith

BPHSAA DIRECTORS

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Josh Piper, Class of 1995
Dale Bajema, Class of 1954
Rob Johns, Class of 1977
Rob Walker, Class of 1977
Dr. Kevin B. Clark, Class of 1984
Roger Edwards, Class of 1963
Mike Landstrom, Class of 1977
Gerry Ochs, Class of 1977
MajBritt (Max) Baker, Class of 1990
Alex Lamb, Class of 1980
Bob Trimble, Class of 1977
Rachael LK Kuryunny, Class of 1997
Christina White, Class of 1997
Thomas Smith, Class of 1997

IN BRIEF BPHSAA AND BENSON TECH NEWS

BPHSAA elects directors and officers.

At its Annual Meeting on November 10, 2025, the BPHSAA elected **Alex Lamb** and **Christina White** to fill vacant director positions.

Bob Trimble, Rachael LK Kuryunny, and **Thomas Smith** were elected to serve additional terms.

A primary purpose of the Annual Meeting is to elect Directors who serve three-year terms. In total, there are 15 directors, of which five are elected or re-elected each year. The BPHSAA's directors provide policy and direction, as well as many of the month-in and month-out duties of the organization.

At the December 8 meeting of the Board of Directors, **Rob Johns** was re-elected Chairperson, **Rachael LK Kuryunny** Vice Chairperson, **MajBritt (Max) Baker** Secretary, and **Bob Trimble** Treasurer for two-year terms beginning January 1, 2026.

See full list of officers and directors at left.

Lifetime BPHSAA memberships now available

At its December 2025 Board of Directors meeting, the BPHSAA voted to offer lifetime memberships beginning in 2026. Lifetime memberships will cost \$200 while annual memberships will remain at \$20.

Donations to the Scholarship Fund

Appeals for 2025 donations to the Benson Tech Alumni Scholarship Fund yielded more than \$13,300. The Fund is managed by the Oregon Community Foundation and awards scholarships to three to five Benson Tech graduates each year. Four were made last year. The 2025 donations will permit larger scholarship amounts and/or number made in future years.

Access to digitized yearbooks

One of the Benson Tech modernization efforts was digitizing all of Benson Tech's yearbooks from the school's beginning. The yearbooks have been scanned. They will soon be available on the BPHSAA website. There will be an announcement made on the website and via email and Facebook once they are accessible.

BENSON TECH ALUMNI – DO YOU OWN A BUSINESS?

We are trying to put together an Alumni Business Directory to promote alumni businesses while providing a list of services for all Benson Tech alumni.

To get your business listed in our directory, please contact info@bensontechalumni.org. Thank you!



ALUMNI TEXT CREDITS

Co-Editors & Writers: Dale Bajema and Roger Edwards

We would like to thank the following for their articles and information making this issue possible Taylor Casteline, Kevin Clark, Kelly Janes, Rob Johns, Rachael LK Kuryunny, Gerry Ochs, Josh Piper, Jessica Russell, Dick Spies, Christina White, and Curtis Wilson. And, our appreciation for the diligent efforts of our designer, Connie Mar.

The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA)

Alumni associations have been part of school communities for generations, providing graduates—both recent and long past—with a way to stay connected to their alma mater.

They serve as a vital means of supporting the school as needs and circumstances continue to evolve. At their core, alumni associations are made up of individuals who share a deep pride in their school and a strong desire to give back and support future generations.



Above (left to right): Benson Tech alumni Josh Piper (Class of 1995), Max Baker (Class of 1990), and John Slaughter (Class of 1994) volunteering at the BPHSAA info table during the Grand Reunion in 2017.

The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) was established in 2008 with approximately 65 members. Since then, the BPHSAA has grown significantly, expanding both its membership and the activities it supports. While much has evolved over the years, one thing has remained constant—the BPHSAA's commitment to advancing and preserving the proud, unrivaled tradition of Benson Tech!

The BPHSAA plays a vital role in supporting the school as its needs continue to evolve, while also finding ways to strengthen the bonds between alumni and current Benson Tech students and staff. At its heart, the association is made up of dedicated individuals who share a love for their alma mater and a commitment to giving back and supporting current and future Benson Tech students!

The BPHSAA continues to support Benson Tech in several key areas:

Advocating for high-quality comprehensive high school experiences with a rigorous focus on immersive, innovative Career and Technical Education (CTE).

- BPHSAA participated in the Master Planning Committee and Design Group that led to the modernization of Benson Tech.
- BPHSAA has testified before the PPS Board of Education.

- BPHSAA met with PPS' Athletic Director urging support of Benson Tech's athletic teams during a discussion about the proposal to eliminate the school's athletics.

Commemorate to continue honoring the educational programs, scholastic and sports achievements, current and former students and staff, and community stewardship.

- BPHSAA maintains historic archives (yearbooks, Tech Pep).
- BPHSAA also gathers photos and assorted memorabilia.

Communicating with alumni and community members to provide current information regarding the status of Benson Tech, BPHSAA events and initiatives, class reunions, and more.

- BPHSAA maintains a webpage (bensontechalumni.org) and social media accounts posting recent and upcoming school happenings.
- BPHSAA publishes a periodic digital newsletter featuring scholarship recipients and important updates from across the school.

Coordinating social and community-building events for Benson Tech alumni and supporters.

- BPHSAA welcomes returning alumni to the Alumni Room during the Tech Show, offering refreshments and opportunities to explore yearbooks and school memorabilia.
- BPHSAA supports individuals organizing class reunions and sponsors a Community Celebration that brings together alumni, reunion classes, teachers, and incoming students and their families.

Elevating students and staff by procuring financial material, and functional support for the school's academic and CTE programs, and its sports teams, clubs, and affinity groups.

- BPHSAA raises funds for the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund, awarding scholarships each year to three to six graduating seniors.
- BPHSAA supports the Benson Tech Foundation, which provides financial assistance for student activities such as HOSA competitions.
- BPHSAA also supports the Benson TechBoosters by helping raise funds for school teams and clubs.

As we navigate the constantly changing climate surrounding funding, programs, and extracurricular activities, the BPHSAA is committed to ensuring that Benson Tech students and staff know their voices matter. BPHSAA is here to offer support and an extra set of hands whenever needed, helping to sustain and strengthen all the initiatives that continue to support the school.

A historical pastime for alumni

Paid members of the BPHSAA are in a position to enjoy an enlightening look at their high school in this new year. The Association has completed digitizing the surviving archived issues of the Tech Pep, Benson Tech's weekly newspaper produced and printed by students.

The first issue is dated September 20, 1920 and only a few issues were lost between that date and May 29, 1960. This archive provides a detailed record of how the school developed to what it has become. There are about 1,600 issues available for review. The issues were scanned with optical text recognition, which makes them searchable. Entering an event, subject, or a name (enclosed with parentheses) will produce a list of issues where that inquiry is mentioned. It can be of interest to search for Benson Tech alumni or teachers to see how they are remembered as students.

To access the Tech Pep archives on the BPHSAA website, begin by logging in as a member. The archive option then appears in the menu under "Members." The issues can be selected either from a chronological list or by searching. Currently, there are 24 pages of individual issues that are posted through the 1958 school year. When complete, the issues to May 1960, the 1967 school year, some issues in the 1980's, and the 1995 to 2010 issues will be added to the website. We are hoping our readers will discover missing issues and get them to the BPHSAA for scanning.



The choice was made to limit access to the Tech Pep archive to paid members to preserve the functioning of the BPHSAA. Our funding largely comes from the \$20 annual dues of members, which was insufficient to carry out this project. It was donated money that preserved the newsprint from over 100 years ago for future generations. It is also an example of what the BPHSAA might accomplish with increased funding. By browsing the issues, readers can learn how the Tech Show came to be; the many innovations of Charles Cleveland, Benson Tech's first principal; the acquisition of the radio station that became KBPS, and a pipe organ; how Portland and Benson Tech reacted to the bombing of Pearl Harbor; and how Benson Tech graduates, the Tech Pep, and KBPS radio towers extended knowledge of the school worldwide.

THANK
YOU!



Thank you to the following who contributed to the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund in 2025 to increase the number and amounts of scholarships given to future Benson Tech graduates:

- Dale Bajema and Diana Coleman
- Alan L. Batts
- John C. Delacy
- Glenn Eades
- Tonyn Flores
- Jay and Allison Graves
- Mitch Fearing
- Fidelity Charitable
- Neal Galash
- Arvin Hille
- Harlan Jencks
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- Sherrie A. Kiel
- Rachael LK Kurynny & Justin Kurynny
- Owen H. Lamp
- Daniel Lizio-Katzen
- Gary McMahon
- Rolf Neill
- David W. Osgood
- Jerald V. Parker
- Judith L. Seltz Trust
- Steve Schlick
- Michael Thornburg
- Donald F. Walton
- Duane Watari

2025 CLASS REUNION WRAP-UP

CLASS OF 1985

The Class of 1985 held its 40th reunion over the weekend of September 12, 2025. The multi-day event began with a Friday night meet-and-greet at the alumni-owned* Kenton Station, and continued the next day at the Benson Tech Community Celebration (photo #1). During the Community Celebration, the Class of 1985 was formally recognized as the winners of the Benson Boosters' inaugural "Ready, Set, Go Astros!" 2024 fundraising competition. Not content with resting on its laurels, the Class of 1985 proceeded to win this year's competition as well, donating over \$3,500 in support of Benson Tech athletics and activities.

**Kenton Station is owned by Benson Tech graduate and stalwart supporter, James Littlejohn (Class of 1984).*



CLASS OF 1995

The Class of 1995 gathered for its 30th reunion on Saturday, September 13, 2025, at Loyal Legion in Beaverton. Among those celebrating was **Josh Piper** (center left, in the blue shirt), BPHSAA co-founder and a member of the Board of Directors from 2008 to present.



CLASS OF 2005

The Class of 2005 also held its reunion over the weekend of September 12, 2025. The class officially celebrated its 20th reunion on Friday the 12th at McMenamin's Broadway Pub, with a smaller group meeting up the following day at the BPHSAA-sponsored Community Celebration.

CLASS OF 1950

Jim Robb (Class of 1950) with assistance from his wonderful wife, Jo—once again organized a gathering for graduates of the Class of 1950. The event, held on April 24 at Elmer's Restaurant in Clackamas, marked 75 years since Jim and his classmates earned their diplomas from Benson Tech. Joining them at this informal reunion was Dale Bajema (Class of 1954), current Director, former Chair, and co-founder of the BPHSAA. Dale spoke with the class about Benson Tech's programs, enrollment, and facilities, and the BPHSAA's various efforts on behalf of the school.

Let the BPHSAA help promote your next reunion!

Does your class end in a '6' or a '1'? Or perhaps a '7' or '2'?

Are you considering, or perhaps already in the process of planning a reunion in 2026 (or 2027)?

The BPHSAA can help to spread the word and connect you with graduates from your class! !

Simply send an email with the following information to info@bentontechalumni.org and we'll share

the details of your reunion on our webpage, social media accounts, and in our newsletters. :

- **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), and
- **CONTACT INFO** for the organizer(s)

Finally, consider aligning your reunion events with the Community Celebration on August 22, 2026! This free, family-friendly event provides a perfect opportunity for you and your classmates to tour the modernized Benson Tech campus.

Benson TechBoosters update

by Kelly Janes, Benson TechBoosters, President

As Benson Tech's first semester draws to a close, your Benson TechBoosters are excited to share what your support has made possible and what's on the horizon for spring semester!

Ready! Set! Go Astros! Fall Fundraiser — A Major Win!

Our annual Ready! Set! Go Astros! Fall Fundraiser was a resounding success, raising more than \$15,000 for Benson Tech. Thanks to the generosity of alumni, families, and supporters, these funds directly support student groups, teams, teacher appreciation, and enrichment opportunities across the school.

A special thank you and congratulations goes to the Class of 1985, who captured the 2nd Annual Class Fundraising Competition title for the second year in a row. Their continued leadership and school spirit set a high bar for the rest of the Benson Tech community. An updated trophy will be on display at our table at Tech Show, so be sure to stop by and check it out!

Stop by the TechBoosters Table at Tech Show

Speaking of Tech Show, be sure to visit the TechBoosters table. We'll be selling Oregon-made jams with custom Benson TechBoosters labels — perfect for gifting or enjoying yourself. Every

jar purchased will support Benson Tech programs, making it an easy (and delicious) way to give back.

Sweet Seasonal Fundraisers Keep Giving

Our inaugural See's Candy Winter Fundraiser generated \$565 in support for Benson Tech, with supporters purchasing \$2,510 in holiday candy! Building on that momentum, TechBoosters has launched two additional seasonal candy shops:

[Valentine's Day – Order by Friday, January 30!](#)

[Spring Joy](#) – Order by Friday, March 20!

These limited-time fundraisers offer an easy way to support Benson Tech while taking care of seasonal gifting, or getting some sweet treats for yourself!

Want to donate today? Support the [Benson TechBoosters General Fund](#). Visit the TechBoosters homepage to donate: bensontechboosters.org (or scan the QR code at left to go directly to our PayPal donation page).



Introducing Our First Sponsor

Last year, our team worked closely with Athletic Director Jessica Russell to develop a sponsorship program to support Benson Tech Athletics. We offer three packages: Astro, Blue, and Orange.

Sponsors receive:

- Banner(s) in the Auxiliary Gym, Main Gym, and Buckman Field (depending upon which package they purchase)
- Visibility in Principal's weekly newsletter
- PA announcements at home contests



- Logo on the Benson Tech webpage
- Recognition within the Benson Tech community

Below is a sample sponsor banner concept. This is for illustration only — we will collaborate directly with sponsors to design banners that reflect their brand and goals.

We are pleased to share that TechBoosters has secured its first sponsor, marking an important milestone as we expand opportunities for businesses and community partners to support Benson Tech.

Thanks to Booster volunteer, Allison Grice at GetMeHomeAllison.com, for being our very first Benson Tech sponsor!

Funds Distribution Process

Last school year, Benson TechBoosters developed a new funds disbursement process to support BPHS teams and student organizations. Each year, TechBoosters will disburse funds across three seasons, based on the amount raised during our fall fundraiser.

For the Winter, Spring, and Fall 2026 seasons, TechBoosters expect to grant \$12,000 to support Benson Tech athletics, clubs, and students. This amount is in addition to funds raised through Concessions (managed by Jeff Strachan, Class of

1977), outside volunteer opportunities, and individual team and club fundraising efforts using the SnapRaise platform.

Supporting Our Teachers

Teacher appreciation remains a cornerstone of our work. We continue to provide food and staff room supplies for our incredible faculty and administration. Want to help? Donate to our Teacher Appreciation Fund (you can use the QR code above – be sure to note teacher appreciation in the form) or sign up to receive volunteer updates on our website: bensontechboosters.org.

Leadership Transition Seeking Our Next President

Benson TechBoosters is beginning the search for a new President to help lead the organization into its next chapter. I currently serve as President. As the parent of a graduating senior, I anticipate transitioning out of the role at the end of this school year or next.

This is a meaningful opportunity for someone who cares deeply about Benson Tech and wants to take a hands-on leadership role. The President works closely with the board, school administration, and volunteers to set priorities, guide fundraising efforts, and support the long-term sustainability of TechBoosters.

Beginning the search now allows for a thoughtful, well-supported leadership transition. Parents, guardians, alumni, and community members are encouraged to consider the role or help spread the word. Know someone who might be a good fit? Are you interested in this meaningful volunteer opportunity? Please email bensontechboosters@gmail.com for more information

Get involved!

At Benson TechBoosters, we believe every contribution makes an impact. Whether through donations, volunteer time, or spreading the word, your involvement helps fuel student success and strengthens the already amazing Benson Tech community.

Your Benson TechBoosters are actively recruiting new volunteers. We have several active initiatives and, as the saying goes, more hands make for lighter work. Keep up to date by attending a meeting (usually third Thursdays – monthly updates and zoom link are on our website (bensontechboosters.org) or following us on social media:

Facebook Group: [Tech Pride Volunteer Community](#)

Instagram: instagram.com/bensontechboosters

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