



# BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT

Chairperson's Message

Page 2

Modernization bonds for PPS

Page 3

Save the Date: Community Picnic

Page 3

The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), June 2018 Edition

## Support the Benson Tech Foundation

In 2012, Benson Tech alumni formally incorporated the Benson Tech Foundation and obtained its IRS 501(c)3 tax-exempt status, allowing gifts to the foundation to be deducted on tax forms. The foundation's mission, as stated in its charter, is to raise funds and tangible resources to exclusively support the school's technical programs. In the ensuing years, the foundation has been fortunate to receive a number of important gifts.

Now with the passage of the May 2017 capital bond measure that will devote more than \$200 million to modernize Benson Tech, the foundation is kicking off a major effort to raise funds for new and replacement equipment for the new building, as well as to use "its good offices" to seek off-site space to temporarily house some of the school's technical shops during the upcoming school modernization.

**Note:** In addition to the Benson Tech Foundation, tax-exempt donations can be made for scholarships to the Oregon Community Foundation (with the notation "Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund"). Or donations can be made directly to Benson Polytechnic High School for any athletic program, extracurricular activity, or regular school program.

Needless to say: help is always needed and appreciated.



**Above:** Jim Piro '70 (right) poses with Benson Tech High School Principal Curtis Wilson Jr. PGE honored Piro, its retiring CEO, with a \$100,000 gift to his alma mater, Benson Tech, which Piro promptly matched with his own donation, providing the school \$200,000 in total.

## Benson Tech receives \$100,000 PGE gift matched by retiring CEO

To much fanfare, Portland General Electric (PGE) donated \$100,000 in early January 2018 to Benson Tech High School in honor of its retiring CEO, Jim Piro, Class of '70. During a Portland Public Schools (PPS) Board meeting soon thereafter, Piro was recognized for his years of unwavering support of Benson Tech as well as public education.

Piro had a surprise of his own. "I just wanted to let you know that my wife and I decided to match the grant, so now it's \$200,000," he announced, drawing a loud ovation in the Benson Tech auditorium.

Piro was student body president before graduating from Benson Tech in 1970. After graduating from Oregon State University, he started a 37-year career at PGE, first as an engineer, then as president and CEO from 2009 to 2017.

Throughout his professional life, Piro served on the All Hands Raised Cradle to Career Leadership Council, the Benson Tech Master Planning Committee, the Oregon Business Council's Education Task Force, Oregon's STEM Investment Council and Oregon State University Foundation's Board of Directors.

(continued on Page 2)

## **Chalkboard Checklist**

### **Dental program expansion continues**

In October 2017, the dental assisting program received a \$40,000 planning grant to pave the way for a fully operational dental clinic designed serve PPS students. Led by JaNae Jamison, Dental Instructor, the necessary space to house areas for equipment and patient care will be created in Benson's current dental lab and is forecast to open during the 2018-19 school year.

The dental assisting program at Benson High School teaches the basics of oral health including oral anatomy and dental assisting skills. On campus in the dental practice lab students work with a Dental Hygienist and a Dentist to learn techniques and practice skills. Students also go off campus to job shadow and practice the entry level skills that they have learned in select dental offices in the Portland area. Currently, senior students are studying for the radiology state exam, which leads to certification and the ability to take dental x-rays.

### **Automotive majors prepare for high-demand workplace**

Juniors and seniors enrolled in Benson Tech's automotive department gain valuable exposure to automotive technology through classroom lecture followed by hands on lab work. A wide-ranging curriculum includes engine design and operation, braking systems, steering and suspension systems, basic fuel and electric systems, manual and automatic transmission operation, and electronic computer-controlled systems.

Led by Ed Railey, Automotive/Aviation Technology Instructor, students are also exposed to other areas of transportation technology including diesel trucks, heavy equipment, motorcycles and aviation basics. Hands-on labs give students the opportunity to work on multiple donated and Benson owned vehicles, motorcycles, diesel trucks, as well as spending time working on their own cars.

**For the latest information about Benson Tech's athletic schedule, visit the Portland Interscholastic League website ([www.pilathletics.com](http://www.pilathletics.com)) and click in the "Schedules" section.**

## **BPHSAA Chairperson's Message**

While remaining committed to the BPHSAA's two objectives, we continue to explore new means to achieve them. Following last year's success of the golfing/cruise event that was part of the Centennial Grand Reunion, that event will be expanded in 2018 as another social opportunity for Benson Tech's alumni. The BPHSAA is working to support the Class of 1978 as it plans a reunion with this year, and is ready and willing to help other classes with similar efforts. Working with the Class of 1997 on a joint August picnic resulted in a better picnic for both groups

Readers might notice some changes in this newsletter as part of an effort to better inform the alumni of the many positive things happening at Benson Tech. Also, visit our website for periodic updates of "breaking news" about the school's and BPHSAA's activities.

As part of its support of Benson Tech, the BPHSAA plans to increase its Scholarship fund over the next few years to award additional scholarships. This multi-year effort and perhaps another will be added to a new Benson Multi year Plan to strengthen Benson Tech even while modernization of the building progresses. Already this year, the BPHSAA has contributed to a new Benson Partners Appreciation Event.

As you probably are aware, Benson Tech does not have a PTA or Boosters Club, or a huge foundation. You, Benson Tech's alumni, and the BPHSAA are the principal advocates, champions and sources of outside support for the school. There are numerous opportunities to add your voice and resources, however large or small, to making and keeping Benson Tech the greatest high school in Portland and Oregon.

As always, the BPHSAA and its directors welcome your suggestions and feedback on its efforts.

- Dale Bajema '54

---

### **Benson Tech receives \$100,000 PGE gift, continued from front cover**

"There wasn't often a time when PPS (needed) some leadership from the business community that Jim didn't raise his hand or when asked, volunteer," said Julia Brim-Edwards, PPS Board chair. "And he also had a very soft spot for all things Benson."

PPS Board member Paul Anthony, himself a strong supporter who had two children attend Benson Tech, read the PPS proclamation, which ended: "Let it be resolved that Portland Public Schools' Board of Education does hereby recognize Jim Piro for his steadfast dedication to students throughout Oregon and his leadership role in expanding opportunities in career technical education and STEM, giving students the opportunity to explore new pathways and careers which will help power their potential."





## **Modernization bond funds for PPS**

Portland-area voters approved a \$790 million bond, the largest of its type in city history, in May 2018 to fund PPS modernization and health and safety projects at Benson Tech, Lincoln, and Madison high schools and additional schools. The Office of School Modernization (OSM) is the PPS department administering the capital improvement projects. For Benson an anticipated phased four-year construction schedule begins in summer of 2021 and would be expected to meet phase completion milestones in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Throughout Winter 2017 and well into Spring 2018 members of BPHSAA, Benson Tech Foundation and general Benson Tech supporters have participated in or have attended various meetings related to the design of the “new” Benson Tech. A short presentation about what is to come was offered by architects and PPS officials at the 2018 Tech Show.

However, in April 2018, stunning announcements from school budget officials revealed dramatically higher-than-expected costs pushing revenue needs to as much as \$136 million over budget. District leadership met weekly to address the budget discrepancies and at one point debated two potential pathways for making up the missing money: either scale back a percentage of funding for each school or find financing for a “second half” of the Benson Tech plan.

Based on actions taken in May 2018 by district leaders, the current momentum and cascading construction schedules were to be maintained with further discussion to spill into summer of 2018 on how exactly Benson Tech’s financing would look.

At this time more than ever, support from the Benson Tech community is critical and welcome as BPHSAA continues to defend the interests of all invested in Benson Tech’s legacy and for the future.

## **News Notes**

Thanks to Elmer’s Flag and Banner and funding from BPHSAA and others, Benson Tech now has two custom outdoor tents that have been in constant use at school gatherings. With a distinctive look the pop up tents convey an “official” Benson Tech presence at athletic events as well as shelter from rain.

Moses Tran, Student Representative on the Board of Education for PPS, completed an educational trip in May 2018 to Helsinki, Finland along with other PPS officials to learn about the top-tier education system Finland has to offer. Thanks to Moses for representing Benson Tech so well on this excursion, as well as for faithfully serving on the PPS board and attending vital events.

Did you know ... Benson Tech’s graduation rate rose to 88.8% for the 2016-17 school year? Oregon’s average graduation rate is 74.8%. Benson Tech’s dropout rate that same year was 0.2% (which is much less than the state average of 3.9%).

Curtis Wilson Jr., now in his fifth year as Principal, was recently named Oregon High School Principal of the Year by the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators and Oregon Association of Secondary School Administrators.

“In all our schools, we know how much leadership makes a difference,” said PPS Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero in his remarks at an April 2018 school assembly to honor Wilson. “Principal Wilson, you are making that exponential difference.”

According to Wilson, he is proudest of being able to build a community with Benson’s diverse student body that’s about 70% students of color. “It’s just being able to work with students, staff and family and help bring them together.”

With the award comes a trip this fall to Washington D.C. as Wilson vies for the 2018 National Principal of the Year.

### **SAVE THE DATE**

*Make plans to attend the 2018 Benson Tech Community Picnic on Saturday, August 11, from 12 noon until 4:00 pm on the front lawn. Meet friends, make new ones, get caught up with what’s in store for the 2018-19 school year. Check the BPHSAA website for updates.*

## ***Two ways you can get involved to support Benson Tech today***

Our advocacy efforts for Benson Tech continue to make an important impact in 2018.

First and foremost, the BPHSAA has two major objectives: to provide social activities for alumni, faculty and friends of Benson Tech, and to promote and support the school. All alumni are invited to become a member, attend a monthly board meeting, help out at the annual Tech Show or the annual August Community Picnic, or participate in one of several advocacy efforts.

Annual membership dues are currently \$20/year, with a portion going to support the school. Paid members can vote at the Annual Meeting, serve on a committee, or be a director of committee chairperson. Connections via social media can follow as many alumni seek out new business

contacts or simply to keep or create social ties.

The BPHSAA Board of Directors meets the second Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the library at Benson Polytechnic High School, 546 NE 12th Avenue.

To join the BPHSAA or for news about activities, visit [www.benson-techalumni.org](http://www.benson-techalumni.org) or email at [info@benson-techalumni.org](mailto:info@benson-techalumni.org).

Secondly, we encourage you to take the time to consider the positive impact of a financial contribution to the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund. Started in 1990 by the Class of 1950, the most recent scholarships were awarded in Spring 2017 in the amount of \$1,611 each within the areas of automotive, health occupations and manufacturing.



Donations via checks made payable to “The Oregon Community Foundation” with the memo line stating “Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund” can be mailed to 1221 SW Yamhill Street, Suite 100, Portland OR 97205. Online donations can also be made at the BPHSAA website at [www.bensontechalumni.org/scholarship](http://www.bensontechalumni.org/scholarship).



**Benson Polytechnic High  
School Alumni Association**  
546 NE 12th Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232