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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), March 2019 Edition

Be part of the BPHSAA!

The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) has two major purposes: to provide social activities for friends, faculty and alumni of Benson Tech, and to promote and support the school.

Since forming in 2008, the BPHSAA has hosted alumni events; facilitated reunions of specific classes; funded a variety of student activities; and repeatedly petitioned the PPS on Benson Tech's behalf. The BPHSAA is also the trustee for a scholarship fund that gives out scholarships to Benson Tech graduates every year (see article on Page 2).

The BPHSAA publicizes its activities on its website, www.bensontechalumni.org and in newsletters each year. There are many opportunities to participate in the BPHSAA and help support the school. Upcoming BPHSAA events include:

- **Monthly Board meetings** (all alumni welcome!) – Typically the second Monday of the month (April 8, May 13, June 10) from 5:30-7:30pm in the library classroom at Benson**
**Please contact info@bensontechalumni.org for location of July and August meetings.
- **Milk Carton Boat Race** – Sunday, June 23, 11:00 am at Westmoreland Park Casting Pond
- **Community Picnic** – Saturday, August 10, Noon-4:00 pm on Benson's front lawn
- **Benson "Community Care" Campus Clean-up** (tentative date) – Saturday, August 17, 9:00 am-noon on front steps of school
- **BPHSAA Annual Meeting and Board of Directors elections** – Monday, November 18, 6:30 pm in the Benson library classroom



Above: Board of Education Directors addressed community concerns about school modernization during the 2018 December Benson Tech Site Council meeting. The public forum, also attended by school administrators, staff, students, parents, and alumni, convened on the Benson Tech campus one week prior to passage of Resolution 5780. Photograph courtesy of Julia Brim-Edwards.

Modernizing Benson Tech under PPS Resolution 5780

By Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D., (Class of 1984)

After nearly one year of public scrutiny and community activism over scarce capital bond project appropriations, Portland Public Schools (PPS) Board of Education (BOE) passed the new Benson Tech Master Plan with a unanimous vote on December 18, 2018. The more ambitious and expensive plan, now authorized by PPS Resolution 5780, gained strong endorsement from Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero and his staff weeks in advance of the Board decision. The resolution directs the PPS administration to deliver to the BOE a modern campus design capable of accommodating 1700 students under guidelines compiled in the Benson Tech Area Program Summary, Benson Tech Site Specific Career Technical Education (CTE) Focus Option Specifications, and PPS Comprehensive High School Educational Specifications. As part of that process, the Benson Tech project team, represented by the PPS Office of School Modernization and Bassetti Architects, may proceed with, finish, report, and amend the stakeholder-advised project schematic design, programming design, and design development well before initiating anticipated construction in mid-2021.

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Benson Tech Foundation update and GeoTech/AlgebraTech win

By Rob Johns (Class of 1977)

For those of you who are unaware, the Benson Tech Foundation is a qualified 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to supporting the Career Technical Education (CTE) programs and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs. Our BPHSAA Board vision for this originally was to provide an option for financial support that donors, principally alumni, could direct their funds toward based on the programs of their choice or those in need. Over the past year, we have set up a PayPal account that makes giving quick and easy and provides the donor a quick reference of the donation.

Over the past several years, we have seen the development of groundbreaking education programs that combine math (geometry and algebra) with CTE programs, creating what is now GeoTech and AlgebraTech

In the case of GeoTech. These two teachers — Cheyenne Montalbin, a carpentry instructor, and Ellie Graiziger, a math instructor — tag team teaching a group of 25 students carpentry and geometry fundamentals to build small houses, playground equipment and benches that are donated to the homeless and charitable organizations. The key is that students get exposure to basic construction fundamentals while seeing the “real-world” value of understanding principles of geometry. The kids have shown great success and this class is quickly becoming a school fundamental.

For AlgebraTech, teachers Cheyenne Montalbin and Kayla Stolte provide this class with algebra fundamentals that apply to business problems in the running of a small business that makes all types of consumer goods with the Benson logo or sayings on them. You can find the AlgebraTech students at Tech Show, they make some very cool stuff while you wait!

A great innovative Benson Tech program has been hamstrung by educational financing rules; they do not



Above: Benson Tech Foundation President Rob Johns (left), GeoTech/AlgebraTech Teacher Cheyenne Montalbin (center), and BPHSAA Chair Dale Bajema thank Mike and Andrew Kern for their recent donation to the GeoTech and AlgebraTech programs at the school.

qualify for traditional federal (known as Perkins Grant) nor state funding (Measure 98 funds). We have a wonderful group of active alumni who are up to date on program needs. Our largest donors, a father-and-son team, Mike and Andrew Kern, stepped up with a solid five-figure grant from their family foundation (as they have done for a number of years now), and they specifically asked that certain monies be directed to support GeoTech and AlgebraTech. The instructors really appreciated it as they need funds for the basic materials of their class.

The Benson Tech Foundation, with donations like the Kerns', really help Benson Tech students to thrive. We know there are other alumni who may have a strong passion for giving to the programs at Benson Tech. We work with Principal Curtis Wilson on each of these donations to be sure we are vetting the process. Please reach out to me to discuss your thoughts or wishes for giving to the Foundation. We think this is an excellent way to start considering for your estate plans as well. I can be reached at 503-314-0041, or robjohns@comcast.net.

Benson Alumni Scholarship Fund awards three seniors in 2018

The Benson Alumni Scholarship Fund has been helping Benson Tech seniors take their next steps for nearly two decades now. 2018 was another banner year for the fund. Thanks to the generosity of Benson Tech alumni such as your yourself, the BPHSAA was able to award \$4,200 in scholarships to three Benson Tech seniors.

Congratulations to **Sergio Joel Lopez**, **Jose Cruz-Flores** and **Gerald Morton-Carter** on being selected as the 2018 Benson Alumni Scholarship Fund recipients. All three are attending local-area community colleges to pursue futures in construction, graphic design and automotive technologies.

Anonymous donor to match scholarship contributions through March 2019

Now is the time to support the scholarship fund! An anonymous donor has pledged to match any fund donations made through March 2019 (up to \$500). To contribute online, visit <http://www.bensontechalumni.org/scholarship>. For donations via check:

Payable to: "The Oregon Community Foundation," Memo: "Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund"

Send to:

The Oregon Community Foundation
1221 SW Yamhill St., Suite 100
Portland, Oregon 97205

(Please note that there is a \$25 minimum for donations made online or by check.)



Above: Members of the Benson Tech Class of 1997 gathered in August 2017 to celebrate its 20th Reunion. Photograph courtesy of David Lim.

Is your class (over)due for a reunion?

Consider incorporating the annual BPHSAA Community Picnic into your reunion plans. This family-friendly August event is an outstanding opportunity to gather your classmates together to catch up and reminisce. Enjoy a BBQ lunch, meet alumni from across the years, and take a tour of the hallowed halls and classrooms of Benson Tech.

The Community Picnic can also serve as an easy, ‘ready-made’ reunion. Simply track down a few of your classmates using social media or your old phone book, then ask them to spread the word to other alumni. Be sure to let the BPHSAA know about your efforts; we can put an announcement up on the website, set aside space for you at the picnic, and perhaps even help you to locate some long-lost friends!

For additional info about the August 10, 2019, picnic, or to spread the word about an upcoming class reunion, contact Rachael LK Kuryunny (Class of 1997) at rachaellkk@gmail.com.

Upcoming class reunions

Class of 1999 20th Reunion: June 21–22, 2019

- Adults-only gathering: Friday, June 21, from 6:00-11:00 pm at Function PDX (919 NW 23rd)
- Family BBQ and fun: Saturday, June 22, from noon-4:00 pm at Oaks Amusement Park

Tickets available at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/benson-high-20-year-reunion-class-of-1999-tickets-52037880702>

Additional information on the “Benson High School c/o 1999 Reunion” Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/248040312529396/>

Class of 1984 35th Reunion: July 13, 2019

- Saturday, July 13, 6:00 pm on at Kenton Station (8303 N Denver)

Additional information on the “Benson Polytechnic High School Class of 1984” Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/84techman/>

New BPHSAA director and new officer elected

Dave Hutchin (Class of 1978) was elected as BPHSAA director at the December 2018 Annual Meeting, joining returning directors Brent Dahl, Josh Piper, Dale Bajema, Rob Johns, Mike Landstrom, Gerry Ochs, Max Baker, Roger Edwards, Jerome Martin, Bob Trimble, and Rachael LK Kuryunny.

At the January 2019 Board of Directors meeting, Bob Trimble (Class of 1977) was elected treasurer to replace Mike Landstrom. Mike has served BPHSAA’s limit of two consecutive terms and will assist Bob going into 2019.



Above: The Rose Festival Milk Carton Boat Race in 2013. The 2019 race will be held on June 23.

Join us at the 2019 Rose Festival Milk Carton Boat Race

Meet up with other alumni at the free, family-friendly Rose Festival Milk Carton Boat Race on Sunday, June 23, at Westmoreland Park Casting Pond (just east of SE 22nd and Rex). Cheer on competitors as they race in home-made, human-powered boats constructed from milk cartons and jugs. Better yet: enter a craft of your own creation into one of nine categories, including youth, adult, and mixed-age groups. Boats from all classes vie for the coveted “Artistry or Velocity” and “People’s Choice” Awards.

A tradition dating back to 1973, this year’s event kicks off at 11:00 am and ends with a “Show Boat Parade” finale. Be sure to stop by the orange and blue Benson Tech tents for free refreshments and to catch up with fellow Techmen/Techsters and their families.

For general information about this, event including entry requirements and deadlines, visit: <http://www.rosefestival.org/event/milkcartonboatrace>

If you have questions about (or would like to help with) this BPHSAA meet-up, contact Rachael LK Kuryunny (Class of 1997) at RachaelLKK@gmail.com.

New Benson Tech parent group formed

Parents of current Benson Tech students have formed a new, and badly needed, group dedicated to supporting the school – the Tech Pride Volunteer Community (TPVC). The TPVC, comprising parents/guardians and other community members and stakeholders, will complement and reinforce the BPHSAA's continuing efforts to support Benson Tech's current activities and its future.

Elizabeth O'Malley, Michelle Collazo and Lisa Yanase first organized TPVC in 2018. They decided to enlarge the effort, holding a public organizational meeting on Jan. 16.

TPVC is engaging volunteers to create a thriving community for Benson Tech students. The group now consists of four subgroups reflecting TPVC's specific objectives: Teacher Support, Student Life, Boosters and Advocacy. In an operational sense, it intends to bring together volunteers to match the needs arising from day-to-day activities throughout the school year.

Attendance and enthusiasm at the January 16th meeting suggests there will be active continued participation, representation of Benson's diverse enrollment, and long term sustainability. (Unlike the BPHSAA, which is made up of Benson Tech graduates with a "lifelong connection" to their alma mater, parent/guardian's connection with the school often ends when their child graduates.)

TPVC aims to maximize the period of family connection by encouraging regular parent participation in activities central to Benson Tech's missions. TPVC has been successful so far in recruiting parents who have students just starting at Benson Tech as well as parents with several students, and/or have pre-high school children that hope to attend in the future.

TPVC fully expects to engage and connect its efforts with other Benson Tech stakeholders and organizations such as the alumni and, of course, Benson's teachers and staff. Several members of TPVC are already active members of Benson Tech's Site Council and the Design Advisory Group. Such group integration should better assure that the larger Benson Tech community express and execute unified support for the school's future.

Since the demise of Benson Tech's PTA and Boosters organization five and 10 years ago, the school has been without any organized support from its parents. The BPHSAA is excited about this new effort and is looking forward to working with TPVC.

For more information about TPVC contact Michelle, Elizabeth, or Lisa at techpridevolunteers@gmail.com.

Principal Curtis Wilson honored for lifetime work in education



Above: Benson Tech Principal Curtis Wilson is joined by his family as he is honored with the World Arts Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award on Jan. 21, 2019. Photograph courtesy of Portland Public Schools.

By Kevin B. Clark, Ph.D., (Class of 1984)

During the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event held at Highland Christian Church, Curtis Wilson, Jr. received the World Arts Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades-long efforts to improve Portland-area students' educational equity, campus engagement, academic and extracurricular attainment, health and wellness, and postsecondary opportunities.

Wilson, the 2018 Oregon High School Principal of the Year (see Benson Tech Alumni Text, December 2018 Edition, Page 3), first knew at an early age that he wanted to devote his life to helping children. His dedication to identifying and solving student-centered issues became evident as a successful student leader

at Portland Public Schools' Roosevelt High School and has since grown as a district teacher and administrator at Grant High School and later Benson Tech, where he continues to serve a steady revitalizing role as the school's longest term principal in 20 years.

Wilson thanked family and colleagues for their support when accepting the award and being acknowledged by Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero and the Board of Education during a public district meeting convened on January 29, 2019.

For more details, please see the PPS District News article, photo gallery, and video retrospective of Principal Wilson's career at the [PPS website \(www.pps.net\)](http://www.pps.net) under District News > January 2019.

Modernizing Benson Tech, continued from front cover

PPS Resolution 5780 forbids major substantive changes to the approved Master Plan without BOE consent. Certain resolution terms and conditions hence stipulate the plan must be resubmitted to the BOE by March 31, 2019 for possible final consideration and approval of pre-selected revisions involving four main areas of concern. These areas include the future status of Multiple Pathways of Graduation (MPG) programs and wrap-around services housed on the Benson Tech campus, a 4000-sf floor-plan reduction to reconcile Benson Tech project expenditures, specifications-compliant design-only improvements of Buckman Field and associated Portland Parks and Recreation facilities, and campus design and space assignment for a specifications-compliant Benson Tech visual and performing arts program. Among other issues, the ramifications of co-locating MPG programs in campus instructional spaces drove past Benson Tech community consternation over BOE commitments to the school's superior comprehensive focus option educational model and promises to lift the artificial student-enrollment ceiling. Present directives ordering Master Plan updates might again imply foreseeable barriers to fulfilling school infrastructural and curricular modernization as collectively envisioned by school stakeholders. Further complicating matters, the BOE expects to add the Benson Tech project to a 2020 capital bond campaign to compensate for depleted 2017-bond allocations. Failure to ballot and pass that presumptive bond necessitates securing a bridge loan, known as a Full Faith and Credit Bond, to finance the project and keep phased construction on schedule and within budget.

Notably, the significant scope, logistics, timeline, and costs of the Benson Tech plan may perpetuate public debate over questionable due diligence, budget escalations, and dedicated capital allotments for bond-funded PPS building improvement projects. The district-assembled Bond Accountability Committee already criticized, in written recommendations and spoken public testimony to the Board, the Benson Tech project's estimated price tag of \$ 296 million dollars, a sum that likely threatens near-term modernization prospects of other high schools once slated for the future 2020 bond referral. The committee also warned the BOE and Portland voters of potential problems caused by dissociating Benson Tech major and academic programming from recently contracted district-wide CTE performance and needs assessments intended to later shape comprehensive high school program development. Such topics historically exacerbate larger public concerns regarding policies and practices effecting district educational equity and trustworthy use

of taxpayer monies. The approved Benson Tech plan gives unique education, career and life advantages to diverse Portland-area students oftentimes underserved by PPS neighborhood high schools. But, the language of PPS Resolution 5780 fails to entirely safeguard the plan from dissenting individuals and groups championing alternative equity arguments unsympathetic to the Benson Tech community mission. These sorts of arguments might still persuade the BOE to compromise consensus Benson Tech stakeholder visioning by replacing the school's state-of-art immersive CTE offerings with hybrid or skills-center educational models, indefinitely co-locating MPG programs on the Benson Tech campus, favoring inadequate Benson Tech CTE program sustainability and expansion, and compelling poor incremental scaling of future Benson Tech student enrollment after district review of forecasted Portland-area population growth, neighborhood-boundary rezoning, and school-enrollment balancing.

BOE approval of the Master Plan might become remembered by the Benson Tech community as the most momentous event since the school's opening over 100 years ago. If school modernization indeed progresses to completion as advocated by the Benson Tech project team and qualified stakeholders, then Benson Tech will be prepared to advance 21st century CTE/STEAM project-based learning to a matchless level of national and perhaps global secondary school excellence. PPS Resolution 5780 is a necessary, but nevertheless insufficient, bureaucratic mechanism to achieve that goal. The Benson Tech community, through persistent coordinated efforts, should establish actionable strategies for public outreach and other contingencies to mitigate any conceivable damage to the Benson Tech Master Plan and, consequently, the school's legacy and future.

Past community efforts, such as private individual and corporate stakeholder testimonials, teacher-organized public student demonstrations, and alumni- and student-guided campus tours, helped district leaders better understand the unique methods, needs, and value of a Benson Tech education. And similar activism may be still needed to overcome possible future obstacles to the Benson Tech community mission.

To learn about and join community engagement opportunities, email BPHSAA leadership at info@bensontechalumni.org or visit www.bensontechalumni.org. Please visit <https://www.pps.net/Page/1838>, to find more Benson Tech modernization details, including Master Plan, Educational Specifications, PPS Resolution 5780, Design Advisory Group activities, and additional information.

BPHSAA Membership Application

Date _____

Name _____
Email _____
Phone _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Former Surname _____
 Alumni (Year) _____
 Faculty (Years) _____
 Other (Specify) _____

Membership Dues

\$20.00 per year X _____ years = \$ _____

Additional Donations

Scholarship Fund: \$ _____
Benson Tech Foundation: \$ _____
BPHSAA general fund: \$ _____
TOTAL: \$ _____

Skills/interests (check all those that apply):

- Membership/alumni outreach
- Communications
- Volunteer coordination
- Event planning
- Educational/vocational partnerships
- Finance
- Long term development
- Other (specify) _____

Your information will only be shared with groups associated with Benson Polytechnic High School and the BPHSAA.

Apply online at www.bensontechalumni.org or mail your application and check to:

Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA)
546 NE 12th Ave, Portland, OR 97232



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