

BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT



The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association
February 2012 Edition

Alumni Calendar of Events

Feb. 16th & 17th..... Tech Show
June 2012..... Class of 1962 Reunion
August 2012..... Benson Community Picnic
August 2012..... Class of 1992 Reunion
October 2012..... Homecoming

Social Gathering at Kenton Station...
...Every 4th Tuesday of the Month

Benson's Centennial on the Horizon

While Benson will not "celebrate" its 100th year until *2015 a few things are already occurring. Benson's "Centennial Class" -- the Class of 2015 -- is already enrolled and is completing their Freshman year.

The Alumni Association will be working with Benson to identify memorabilia to mark the school's 100th year. We are looking for old pictures of the school and student activities, sports memorabilia, unusual student-built objects, etc... If you have such items that you would be willing to share in 2015, please contact the Association at info@BensonTechAlumni.org.

Many Benson alumni have come from families where many members are former Benson students, e.g. brothers, sisters, cousins, husbands, wives, and multiple generations. Any records and/or family pictures of these "extended" Benson family connections would be valuable.

*Simon Benson donated the funds for the current school building in 1915 and the former Portland Trades School changed its name to the Benson Polytechnic School.

Who Needs an Alumni Association?

In this new age of social networking some people are saying that alumni organizations are outdated. There is no question that Facebook, Twitter, and other sites are great means of staying in touch with friends and classmates from high school. In fact, you can find 2 Benson Tech groups on Facebook. That is all fine and good, however...

Benson will always need the organized support of its thousands of graduates to remind the school district and Portland about the value of a technical high school experience in preparing for the workplace and life. The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) is continuously working with Principal Carol Campbell, Benson's teachers and staff, District officials, various businesses, and schools to provide direct and indirect tangible assistance to strengthen and build Benson's programs. The majority of the Association's meetings, committee work and efforts are devoted to this mission

...and, we can always use more help.

The Association also recognizes that as good as they are for keeping connected, social networks do not satisfy every desire of the alumni to keep in touch. Thus the Association sponsors opportunities throughout the year for face-to-face contact -- including a summer picnic, the Alumni Room at Tech Show, and a monthly gathering at Kenton Station. Member or not, Benson alumni and supporters are always welcome at these events to share the never-ending Benson Spirit.

Keep up with the Benson Alumni Association at www.BensonTechAlumni.org.

...You can safely join there too.

Portland Workforce Alliance's Support For Benson

Benson students are receiving valuable support from the Portland Workforce Alliance (PWA) in pursuing their dreams, education and careers. PWA, whose office is located at Benson, provides a variety of concrete real life workplace experiences for Portland students to encourage their academic success and to help them make more informed career choices

A specific example of PWA efforts is a youth apprenticeship training program (involving PPC Structural, Gunderson, Tice Industrial, and Kraft Foods) that allows several Benson students to work alongside skilled electricians and millwrights while earning a salary. Other PWA efforts involving Benson students include factory tours, meetings with industry professionals,

shadow days, summer employment programs, and other career days. All of Benson's students will be attending the PWA sponsored NW Youth Careers Expo in May along with students from 70+ high schools from around the state.

PWA is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to building enduring alliances between local businesses and the metro high schools. If you, or the business that you work for, would have any interest in working with PWA to provide career experiences especially for Benson student please contact Kevin Jeans-Gail, Director of PWA at 503-201-1803 or kgail@pps.k12.or.us.

“The School That Works”

Since the Portland Public School district almost closed Benson in 2010 - and did downsize its enrollment - Benson has been bouncing back. An imaginative and energetic effort by the teachers and staff in February 2011 attracted more than a hundred more applicants than the allotted 250 entrance positions. An even greater one is underway this January and February to attract students to enter Benson this fall.

Last school year Benson fully met its Average Yearly Progress (AYP) targets mandated by No child Left Behind – one of only two Portland high schools that did. The Benson Class of 2011 graduation rate of 77.1% placed it in the top tier of Oregon high schools (and the best school in Oregon for the graduation rate of minority students) Later in the summer of 2011 Benson was designated as one of the state’s “Outstanding High Schools” for its recent academic achievements.

While Benson has had to reduce the number of “majors” consistent with the smaller enrollment, the technical academies continue to provide a rich mix of hands-on learning, meetings with working professionals, field trips, and in a few cases youth apprenticeships and part-time employment opportunities. As every Benson graduate will attest: Benson’s unique hands-on “shop” experiences have directly and/or indirectly benefitted their careers since graduation. The technical expertise and know-how gave them a leg-up in entering the job market or studying technical subjects in 2 and 4 year colleges.

Application Time To Attend Benson

Benson’s teachers and staff are in the midst of “recruiting” new students to attend Benson this coming September. Applications to begin attending Benson this fall are due by February 29th. Benson’s staff and principal have been visiting all of Portland’s public schools 8th graders to explain the school’s unique hands-on technical experience that is integrated with solid academic classes including advanced placement classes. A student-teacher produced video (plus a brochure) is being used to explain and highlight Benson’s programs. The school is also having in February several opportunities for students and their parents to visit Benson for additional information.

Benson will have at least 250 openings for freshmen (plus a few more for 10th grade students). If last year is any indication – and, Benson has received an Outstanding recognition since – there will be more applicants than openings. The District office will allocate the openings among the applicants by a “lottery”. For more information see both the Benson and PPS’s webpage.

Contacting the BPHSAA

BPHSAA c/o Benson High School
546 NE 12th Ave. Portland, OR 97232

Website: www.BensonTechAlumni.org
Email: Info@BensonTechAlumni.org

Alumni Pep Band Performing

The Alumni Association has recently organized a Pep Band to play at Benson games and alumni events in the aftermath of the District eliminating all music programs at Benson. A few current Benson students played with the group this year and it is hoped that more will join next year. Though yet a small group, the band has played at several recent basketball games, and will continue to support the men’s basketball team (coached by Troy Berry ’81) as they pursue a state title. If you or anyone you know has any interest in playing with the group in the coming year please contact Wayne Devore at info@BensonTechAlumni.org.

Benson House Update

Dick Spies (’64) has been working with Benson teachers to prepare the plans for the next student-built house located in northeast Portland. The house has been designed for an Energy Star Advantage and LEED rating to familiarize students with building for a green and sustainable world. It is expected to receive its building permit and to have the foundations poured before school is out in June.

In the meantime Benson students are putting finishing touches on the house started in 2009 from a design by Tammy Hite (’91) and 3 of her former students from the Class of 2008. The cabinetry for the house was on display at the 2011 Tech Show and is now installed. It is expected that this house will be on the market through a Portland realtor later this spring.

Meet Fellow Alumni @ Kenton Station

The monthly gathering of Benson alumni continues at Kenton Station in North Portland on the 4th Tuesday of every month. This is an informal and laid-back hour or two to meet other Benson alumni and share experiences during and since your days at Benson. The happy hour prices are low, the big selection of beer is good, and the Benson spirit soars. There is NO solicitation for ANYTHING – not even the modest \$12 for annual dues to the association.

See the Association’s webpage for any last minute changes in the date and time as well as any additional Alumni gatherings (including class reunions). Kenton Station is owned by a Benson graduate and is located at 8803 N. Denver Ave.

More Dollars for Scholarships

The Alumni Association recently raised almost \$1500 to be added to the amount previously invested in the Oregon Community Fund. Each year the Association uses the earnings on the investment to give scholarships to Benson graduates (selected by the school) who are planning to attend a 2 year school or enter into an apprentice program. Over the years over 50 scholarships have been awarded. Last year seven scholarships were granted. Additional tax-deductible contributions are always welcome. If you would like to help future Benson graduates realize their dreams, you can contribute securely on the Alumni’s website.