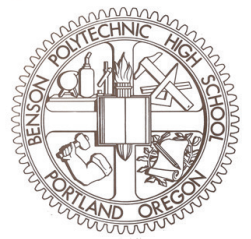


# BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT

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



## Alumni Calendar of Events

Feb. 21st & 22th.....Tech Show  
July 19, 2013.....Class of 1983 Reunion  
Aug. 17, 2013 .....Benson Community Picnic,  
Blue Lake, Multnomah Shelter B, Noon to 4:00 p.m.  
Social Gathering .....Every Fourth Tuesday of  
the Month at Kenton Station (303 N Denver Ave.)

## Planning your next reunion

Are you interested/involved with planning an upcoming reunion? The Benson Alumni Association has a growing database of contact information and active presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Let us help you publicize your event!

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## KPBS on the rebound

Entering Summer 2012, the future of KBPS was in question. After losing its station manager to budget cuts, the radio station and its owner, Portland Public Schools, were facing the possibilities of fines from the FCC. With no money to hire a full-time station manager, it seemed certain that KBPS would go silent.

In stepped Benson Principal **Carol Campbell**. After consulting with district lawyers, Principal Campbell determined that if she took on the role of station manager and found the money to hire a part-time operations manager to run the program, KBPS could continue to broadcast. In August, long-time KBPS instructor **Kevin Flink** was hired.

Flink was quick to bring in KBPS alumni to help remind the program of its storied history. KPBS traditions, such as live election night results, were brought back with alumni help. The Teen Sound program was returned to a Top 40 format. They even broadcast live during the 2012 Homecoming game, which was played at Buckman Field for the first time.

Alumni have also been crucial in helping Flink raise the ~\$6,000 needed to keep the students broadcasting over the summer. To date, they've raised roughly 50 percent of the necessary funds. If you would like to donate, contact Kevin Flink at [kflink@pps.net](mailto:kflink@pps.net) or call (503) 916-5828.

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## OIT and Benson form partnership

The pathway to quality technical careers became a little clearer recently. On February 1st, the leaders of Benson High School and the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) entered into a partnership that will provide a multitude of new opportunities for students, such as:

- Regular student visits to OIT's Klamath Falls and new Wilsonville campuses
- OIT professors providing student mentoring and guest lectures
- Coordination between Benson and OIT staff on creating dual-credit courses
- Increased scholarship availability

Alumni Association Chairman **Rob Johns** ('77) was instrumental in bringing OIT and Benson together and helping them iron out the details of their agreement. The idea that Oregon's own technical college had no relationship with Oregon's top technical high school was unbelievable to Rob, so he set out to change it. Nearly 10 months later, he helped celebrate the agreement at a ceremony that started at the Benson campus and ended at OIT's new Wilsonville campus with a luncheon. The president of OIT was very generous with his time and had an extensive tour of Benson's CTE programs. At the lunch at the OIT Wilsonville Campus, there was an extensive round table discussion and many fresh thoughts and plans came from that meeting. This is a truly remarkable relationship with tremendous opportunity for Benson students, including reduced cost for advanced math.

## What's happening at Benson?

While most of us alumni only think of Benson at Tech Show or an athletic event (if at all), things are going on at Benson every school day month after month. Here are a few highlights of Benson events and activities while we alumni were doing and thinking of other things:

**Right now** the annual enrollment window is open for eighth graders to apply to attend Benson — with the deadline for applications at 10 p.m. on Feb. 22, 2013. The Portland Public School District has granted 250 freshmen openings for the 2013-14 school year (for a total enrollment target of 850 students). For the second year, Tech Show is being held in February as part of Benson's effort to ensure that students who apply for the coveted spots are well-informed. Other information sharing efforts were started in January, including a Benson staff member meeting with every eighth-grade class and showing a Benson student-made video about the school, a parent and student visitation night on February 14th at Benson, and two "shadow days" attended by 320 eighth-graders at Benson. The district will pick the "lucky" eighth graders by lottery in late March from the applications. (In February 2012, more than 400 applications were received for the district allocation of 260 openings.)

**In May 2012** another Benson student-built house was finished and celebrated. That event, attended by representatives from the mayor's office and the school district, was covered by Portland's newspapers and KOIN Channel 6 television. The house sold two days after being listed and for more than



House built by Benson students completed in May 2012.

the listed price. **Tammy Hite**, ('91) provided the design. The "next" Benson House that will be LEED-certified — from a design by **Dick Spies** ('64) — is under way this school year with the foundations poured in January and the framing about to begin. Completion is planned for 2014.

**Last June**, 212 seniors graduated from Benson, representing 81 percent of the freshman class that started four years earlier giving Benson one of the best graduation rates in Portland. (The 2011 class rate was 85%) About half of the graduates received some sort of a scholarship or award totaling over 1.5 million dollars. Josh Cha received an ACT Six scholarship and Khang Truong received a Gates Millennium Scholarship (only two were awarded in Oregon) — these are "full-ride" scholarships through college. Already this year, a current Benson senior has received an ACT Six scholarship and there is another on the National Merit finalist list. At a time when there is great public concern about high school graduation rates and student achievement, Benson continues to succeed academically while simultaneously providing a solid technical background to immediately enter the workforce or to continue post-secondary studies.

**This past September**, a record number of students returned from the previous school year to become sophomores, junior and seniors. With an entering freshman class of 260 Benson started the school year with nearly 900 students. Benson now has 868 students in February 2013.

**Also beginning last September** a new class was offered — "Construction Design" — that imaginatively uses the ever-scarce school resources. The class is being taught by the blended efforts of a teacher from construction and two teachers with design skills from communications and supplemented by professionals from the field helping to teach this foundational class.

Throughout the 2012-13 school year, efforts were continued to share information: Students from Communications have maintained the school's student-created website. Principal **Carol Campbell** writes a weekly Benson Polytechnic Parent News-

(continued on next page)

### *What's happening at Benson?, continued*

letter (a Spanish version is planned). And a new electronic monitor has been installed in the front entry, with support from the Benson Alumni Association and the PTSA, providing current school information.

The number of businesses partnering with Benson to enrich the technical experience of Benson students grew in the past year as the result of continuing and increased effort of Benson teachers and principal. This effort was given a boost by the mayor's office last fall, which led to representatives from more than 40 Portland businesses touring Benson to explore opportunities to assist the school's technical programs. Most of these companies have since offered to partner with Benson through donations of materials and equipment, field trip opportunities, providing guest speakers and/or paid internships. The Portland Workforce Alliance (PWA) provided valuable help in this effort (see article on Page 4).

The opportunities for students to actually work in shops, medical facilities, etc., are proscribed by law in a different way than they were in years past. Nonetheless, during the past six months Benson's staff, working with the PWA, has been able to increase the number of student apprenticeships offering part-time paid experience on the shop floor from two to five. More than 40 students applied for these internships.

**Earlier this February**, Benson and the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will increase the interaction between the two schools. The agreement envisions teacher exchanges between the schools and articulation of courses so students can earn college credit at little or no charge (see article on Page 1).

About 202 seniors are on track to graduate in **June 2013** — again keeping Benson's graduation rate well above the Oregon average of 71 percent.

The school recently hired a bilingual community agent to help reach out to Latino families. The weekly parent newsletter is translated into Spanish and school officials have seen more families are participating in school events.

The student body at Benson is very diverse — 75 percent of students are non-white. The staff is engaged in equity training through the district endorsed program called "Courageous Conversations About Race." Staff participate in monthly workshops and professional development sessions which include looking at data disaggregated by race and discuss how instructional practice through an equity lens.

Benson's location near Lloyd Center and Holladay Park makes it convenient for students but also creates the potential for activity that would not be appropriate for school. Benson is one of the few schools in the district with a No-Hat policy, which makes it easier to identify people who are not students. Every student is provided with a lanyard and ID holder to display their ID and many students are choosing to have them visible. All but two outside doors are locked and the campus is regularly patrolled by administrators and the campus monitor. Benson's discipline incidents were cut in half last year largely due to the efforts of all staff to promote a safe learning environment and a culture of respect.

For coverage of Benson news and events throughout the year, visit the Benson Alumni Association website, [www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org).

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### **A place for Benson memorabilia?**

Benson Polytechnic High School enjoys a unique status among Portland high schools in its connection with a local patron. Consequently, the school faces the dual challenges of storing and displaying not only nearly a century of academic and athletic records and awards but also the appealing acquisition of memorabilia related to the activities of Simon Benson. The Alumni Association has met with a professional curator and is working with Benson staff members and the PTSA to study the question.

## Simon Benson: Northwest lumber king, civic leader and visionary (and, may we add, the namesake of Benson Polytechnic High School)

Multnomah Falls... the Historic Columbia River Highway... Portland's iconic "bubbler" fountains... the Benson Hotel... Benson Polytechnic High School... these priceless public assets exemplify the dedication and generosity of Simon Benson, a humble woodsman who overcame daunting challenges to become Oregon's Lumber King and then worked as diligently giving back to his adopted state and country.

A poor Norwegian immigrant, Benson's life was a cross-section of Oregon's development and a



Simon Benson

story of incredible achievement. He revolutionized Oregon's logging industry, pioneering steam power and invented huge seagoing log rafts. He led the movement to build good roads and was first chair of the Oregon State Highway Commission. Benson was honored as Oregon Citizen of the Year at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (1915) in San Francisco. Recently, several Benson supporters had the privilege of meeting and enjoying a presentation about Simon Benson by Sig Unander, Jr., Benson's great-grandson. Mr. Unander is very interested in hearing about the Alumni Association's plans for Benson Polytechnic High School's centennial celebration in 2017.

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### Manufacturers tour Benson

Representatives from the manufacturing industry toured Benson High School's Career Technical Education Programs, specifically in the areas of automotive, construction, electrical and manufacturing, on Oct. 25 and Nov. 1, 2012. The 40 professionals that visited the school all agreed that skilled employees are needed in the industry facing an aging workforce. They also expressed their support for CTE and the need to grow and expand such programs for young people to be successful in and after high school.

Reactions/comments from participants of the tour included:

- *"It was an eye opening experience. I was very impressed with the students and their attitude towards their studies."*  
- Gary DeVore, Senior Facilities Maintenance Supervisor, Portland Parks & Recreation
- *"It is truly inspiring to see a secondary education system that challenges students to both think about their future role in society and provides them with the tools to work towards that goal."*  
- Kyle von Hoetendorff, Marketing, Chris King Precision Components
- *"I thought the students did a great job representing the school. They spoke with confidence*

*and enthusiasm. I was especially impressed with your electrical/automation class."*

- Bruce Iredale, VP/GM Portland, Evraz Oregon Steel, a division of Evraz Inc. NA

Benson Principal Carol Campbell was pleased with the tremendous response from business partners to her invitation to tour the school. Manufacturers expressed their willingness to offer their time in the classroom, host work-site tours, and offer internships. "We look forward to working with all these companies to help them meet their future workforce needs and better prepare our students for family wage jobs," she said.

### Benson Activities on TV

With the support of Benson administrators, a television screen donated by a member of the Benson Alumni Association Board and the flawless skills of Benson Instructional Technology personnel, the school's main entry now boasts an electronic display of the daily schedule, news and other features of interest to the school community. Take a look on the way by. Additional screens at other locations in the building are being considered as resources become available.