

# BENSON TECH ALUMNI TEXT

The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA)  
August 2013 Edition



## Alumni Calendar of Events

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 BPHSAA has a growing database of contact information and active presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Let us help you publicize your event!

## BPHSAA annual meeting date changed

The date of the BPHSAA annual meeting has been changed from August to occur during Benson's annual Tech Show. The BPHSAA Board of Directors amended the bylaws on July 8, 2013, with the intent to increase the meeting participation and expand its content.

The next annual meeting will be held this February 2014 on the first night of Tech Show in the Alumni Room (the Old Gym) at 8:00 p.m. The exact date and a meeting agenda will be posted on the BPHSAA's website ([www.bensontechalumni.org](http://www.bensontechalumni.org)) this fall after the school schedule, including the dates of Tech Show, is announced.

The election of directors to fill existing vacancies as well as to replace retiring directors will be held during the

February 2014 annual meeting. (Directors are elected to a three-year term and may be elected to only two successive terms.) It is expected that five positions will need to be filled.

The BPHSAA Board of Directors meet monthly to plan and direct the association's many activities supporting Benson (e.g. scholarships, support for the Career Center remodeling, etc.) as well as organize social events such as the Benson Community Picnic, the Alumni Welcome Room at Tech Show, and "monthly meet-ups" in Portland. These meetings are held at Benson during the school year. Exact dates and times can be found on the BPHSAA website. All Benson alumni are welcome to attend the BPHSAA monthly meetings and offer ideas.

## Benson leadership change for upcoming school year

In July 2013, Carol Campbell, Benson's principal for the past two years, was reassigned to fill the vacant principal position at Grant High School. Portland Public Schools (PPS) Superintendent Carole Smith, in making the announcement, said that Campbell had provided vital leadership for Benson following the completion of the High School Design in 2010-11 and that the work she had started would be continued.

At the same time, Smith said a new principal for Benson would be selected to start the 2013-14 school year. Several internal candidates from PPS were interviewed on August 12. Community input concern-

ing the selection was sought at a public meeting at Benson on July 22 with more than 50 teachers, parents, alumni and other supporters participating. The school district's website also provided an opportunity for the submission of ideas. Two BPHSAA Board members, Dick Spies and Chuck Heil, are part of the Portland Public Schools' selection committee to find Benson's new principal. At the time this newsletter went to press (August 2013), no candidates had been announced or selected for the position.

Campbell came to Benson in July 2011 after being principal of the Silver School, one of four compo-



Carol Campbell

nents of Newberg High School. Prior to her post at Newberg High School, she had taught science at Portland's Grant High School for nine years and been a teacher and athletic coach in St. Charles, MO.

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## **Career counseling center remodeling and media event - volunteers needed**

The BPHSAA is supporting an initiative by the Benson counselors to remodel the school's existing counseling center. The remodeled space will expand the center's capability to counsel students and to better acquaint them with career opportunities. Alumni volunteers have helped with the repairs and painting during July. A final day of painting with media coverage is planned for September. The BPHSAA has paid for the design work and some of the supplies. For more information or to volunteer, contact Donald Wear, Class of '77 and BPHSAA Board member at DonaldWear@yahoo.com.

## **Volunteer counselors needed for upcoming school years**

A number of alumni have already offered to work part-time in the newly remodeled counseling center as volunteer counselors a few hours each week through the coming school year. The center is hoping to have up to 40 trained volunteers to help out in the coming school year. The center's staff is providing a short training course to prepare volunteers to work with students concerning career and school issues and questions. This is a wonderful opportunity for alumni to give back to Benson, to share our experiences/wisdom with current students, and to provide guidance for career opportunities/advanced education. If you'd like more information or are interested in volunteering, contact Benson Counselor Amy Henry, at amy.henry@pps.net.

## ***Three alumni-funded scholarships awarded***

At the 2013 Benson High School Awards Ceremony, roughly \$3,400 in scholarships funded by the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund were given to three graduating seniors: Greeley Guinn (Communications) will attend PCC with a general focus; Isabela Gomez (Health Occupations) will continue a medical career at PCC; and Ryan Girres (Automotive Technology) will study business at Mt. Hood Community College.

These scholarships are funded by the annual earnings on monies raised by BPHSAA and invested in the Oregon Community Foundation. They are given to graduates to attend a two-year school or a special training program. Since the inception of scholarship program, more than 40 Benson students have received scholarships.

While the BPHSAA has an annual fundraising effort each December, donations of any amount are welcome any time. These donations will, at noted earlier, be added to the money previously invested. Donations may be sent directly to The Oregon Community Foundation, Suite 100, 1221 SW Yamhill Street, Portland, Oregon 97205 and made payable to "The Oregon Community Foundation" with a memo reading "Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund."

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## ***Benson leadership change for upcoming school year, continued from Page 1***

During her two years at Benson, Campbell was a passionate and effective champion for Benson's Career Technical Education (CTE) programs while simultaneously increasing Benson's high academic performance. Several technical programs (drafting/design, computer science, and health occupation classes) were restored or enhanced after recent budget cuts and new classes were added in robotics and geometry for construction. Vigorous efforts were made to strengthen existing relations with businesses already partnering with Benson, as

well as establishing new alliances to offer more career learning experiences for Benson students, including tours, in-class presentations and student apprenticeships. When the opportunity presented itself, Campbell signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Benson and the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT), which will open doors to multiple opportunities for students in the coming years.

Campbell was an active supporter of Benson student activities including regularly attending athletic events and other student programs.

She attempted to increase parent involvement at Benson initiating a weekly newsletter to parents and attending almost every Parent Teacher Student Association monthly meeting. From her first month at Benson, she developed a close working relationship with Benson's alumni, attending monthly BPHSAA meetings and the annual Benson Community Picnic.

The BPHSAA wishes to thank Carol Campbell for her superb efforts at Benson and wishes her success in her new position.

## A five-year plan for Benson High School

A five-year plan to guide the further development and growth of Benson High School is being developed by the Benson Site Council. This plan, perhaps the first in Portland and Oregon, is expected to better focus the efforts of Benson's teachers and staff, business partners, parents and alumni on the highest-priority ways to directly benefit Benson's students. Available resources for Benson's programs are expected to be tight in the coming years even with donations from Benson's valuable partners and the alumni. A plan will also help in channeling those resources to the great need.

The plan has 10 major goals grouped into Instruction, Community Building, and Development. Each goal is accompanied by measurable tasks or steps in each year. While not dependent upon the PPS District's approval of a "grow trajectory" for increased enrollment, the plan does incorporate such a review and discussion. It envisions the involvement of parents, partners and alumni in many of the tasks.

A draft of the five-year plan was given to the rest of Benson's teachers for their review and comment over the summer. It is expected that their comments as well as those from the PTSA/parents, the Portland Business Alliance and partners, and the alumni will be incorpo-

rated by the Site Council into a final plan in September. Implementation is expected to begin this fall as well.

Concurrent with the effort on a five-year plan, the BPHSAA's Long Term Development Committee has been working to refine a longer term vision for Benson. This effort, with school involvement, is focusing on long term partners and the eventual rebuilding of Benson with future bond money. Developing strong and relevant partners is important for the experiences and knowledge that business and post-secondary schools bring to Benson students as well as resources they might offer for the development and operation of the school. Consideration is even being given to their physical presence in a rebuilt Benson.

The Committee has recently aligned itself with a similar committee at Lincoln High School to attract the PPS School Board's attention to put both of these important inner-city schools on the next bond measure now planned for November 2016. The district has indicated that it would welcome input this coming January regarding a next bond measure. If the Committee's work is accepted, additional conceptual work for Benson might be immediately supported with money from the current bond funds.

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## Benson's enrollment cap

Since the completion of the High School Redesign effort in 2010, Benson High School's total enrollment has been set at 850 students, and with a further cap of 250 on the number of entering ninth-grade students each year. Each year since then, Benson's teachers and staff have visited every eighth-grade class in Portland telling them of the opportunities at Benson. That effort combined with the growing interest of parents and students in hands-on technical learning have resulted in about 400 applicants annually. Through a lottery process, 250 students are selected for the entering freshman class.

Several attempts by Carol Campbell, then Benson's principal, and alumni

and supporters have been made to increase both the entering class and the overall enrollment. Though the "cap" was not changed this past spring despite very vocal requests and an pointed editorial in *The Oregonian*, Portland Public Schools (PPS) Superintendent Carole Smith, and several members of the PPS School Board indicated that the issue would be addressed before the next application process occurs in February 2014.

It is expected that Benson's staff, backed by the Benson Site Council's Five-Year Plan (see article above), will meet with Carole Smith and the PPS School Board this fall too discuss the inequities of denying interested students and families of



BPHSAA Board members rally in support of raising Benson's enrollment cap.

the opportunity to pursue a technical education in today's economic environment. It is hoped that this discussion will put Benson's enrollment on a "growth trajectory," as suggested by *The Oregonian*, incrementally increasing Benson's enrollment while keeping the enrollment of Portland's neighborhood high schools in balance.



## Interested in history? Got history?

The BPHSAA has begun cataloging, collecting and preserving items connected with Benson's history—old pictures, uniforms, books, documents, items made in its shops, and yearbooks going back to 1917. It has begun by researching and designing a cataloging system and reviewing the accumulation of items that have been casually stored at the school over the years. A determination is being made of which items to keep and preserve. The project also involves finding a suitable place to house and display these historical items. This effort is being fully coordinated with Benson High School and its principal.

This effort is particularly timely as Benson's Centennial is rapidly approaching. The school has designated 2017 as the appropriate time to observe its 100<sup>th</sup> year. 1917 marked the first class graduating from Benson of students that had started at Portland School of Trades. Benson Polytechnic, as a four-year integrated technical and academic high school, was founded in 1916 with

money donated by Portland timber magnate Simon Benson. (It subsumed the Portland School of Trades that was started a few years earlier.)

Organizing, storing and displaying Benson's history is a big and continuing endeavor. Volunteers are really needed. Anyone interested in helping for a short while or longer will be greatly appreciated. For more information or to volunteer to help with the Benson History project, contact Chuck Heil at [cpheil@msn.com](mailto:cpheil@msn.com).

While the immediate effort has focused on items already at Benson, additional historical items will be sought and appreciated including old photographs, athletic and play programs, posters, artifacts from the shops, yearbooks, athletic and band uniforms, and trophies. All accepted donations will be properly attributed, catalogued, preserved and kept safely. If you have items that you think should be made a part of Benson's historical record, contact Chuck or Benson's principal for more information.

### ***Benson Tech Foundation created***

Benson Tech Foundation, Inc. has been created to generate cash and in-kind donations to support and expand Benson's technical programs (Career Technical Education or CTE). Though there has been some modest budget increases, including additional teachers, for Benson and other Portland schools for the 2013-14 school year there is never as many resources as needed for the technical programs. Contributions from Portland's business community of materials, equipment and time have greatly helped to fill the "gap", but more are needed. Contributions are especially needed to replace out dated equipment and to allow Benson's technical offerings to evolve with the changing workplace.

The Foundation was incorporated with the State of Oregon in July 2012. A 501(c)(3) application is pending with the IRS for the Foundation to accept donations of either money or in-kind items such as equipment, tools, or materials that might earn

the donor a tax deduction. Receipt of a 501(c)(3) designation will be announced on the BPHSAA website when it is received and resource gathering efforts will commence.

The Foundation is envisioned as an enabler and booster for Benson's technical/CTE programs. This fall, the Foundation is organizing a major kick-off event, gathering Portland area businesses together to explore their interest in partnering with Benson's CTE teachers to offer more career awareness and preparation opportunities, including facility tours, classroom presentations, and even student apprenticeships. Some businesses have already stepped up to help — more would be better. If you work for a company or know someone that might be interested in giving Benson students a little more exposure to the work world, contact Rob Johns ([robjohns@comcast.net](mailto:robjohns@comcast.net)) or Dale Bajema ([dalebajema@comcast.net](mailto:dalebajema@comcast.net)).