



**BENSON TECH**

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), August 2021 Edition

## Rob Johns' speech for Benson Tech groundbreaking (August 7, 2021)

Hello, my name is Rob Johns, Class of '77. I am the chair of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association, also known as the Benson Tech Alumni.

Please note the use of the word "polytechnic," a word that is very specific, having the meaning "devoted to instruction in many technical or applied sciences," so I encourage Portland Public Schools and the media to keep that word in the description of the school in their publications at least by adding the abbreviation as "Tech" to respect this differentiation for a specialized high school.

We recognize today the groundbreaking for a reimagined Benson Polytechnic High School that all of Portland's kids can continue to attend regardless of neighborhood geography or demographics. We have overcome several challenges to get to this place, I am not sure there has ever been the same high school on two school bond measures. We thank the voters!

We are also recognizing the legacy of the gift of Simon Benson and his vision along with his family who are here today to help us celebrate.

The alumni of a public school represent the product of the public institution's collective impact on a set of students who have together experienced a special physical space and feel a common bond of that experience.

*(continued on Page 5)*



**Above:** Local officials; PPS leaders; and Benson Tech staff, students, and alumni (including BPHSAA chair Rob Johns at far right in photo) were on hand to celebrate at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Benson Tech Modernization project held on August 7, 2021. Photo courtesy of Nathan Swoverland.

## Benson Tech Modernization project officially begins

After years of hoping and planning, the official groundbreaking for the Benson Tech Modernization happened on August 7 before a crowd of more than 100 Benson Tech supporters. After a number of short speeches, the speakers and honored guests turned a bit of ceremonial dirt with gilt shovels. (See sidebar to left for BPHSAA Chairman Rob Johns' remarks.)

Anderson Construction is moving on the site to begin the three-year modernization project. The actual demolition of parts of the historic Benson Polytechnic High School building to be replaced will begin this fall. Gerry Ochs, one of the BPHSAA's directors, has been designated as a liaison with Anderson Construction and the Office of School Modernization to keep the alumni closely informed of the construction progress. In turn, the BPHSAA will regularly post updates on [bensontechalumni.org](http://bensontechalumni.org), as will [Portland Public Schools \(PPS\) District](http://Portland Public Schools (PPS) District) on its [Benson HS Modernization webpage](http://Benson HS Modernization webpage).

**With Benson Tech closed for construction for the next three years, students will be attending in-person classes on the former Marshall High School campus in SE Portland at 3905 SE 91st Avenue, Portland, OR 97266. See associated article on Page 5 for more information.**

# Benson Tech moves to Marshall campus temporarily

Benson Tech's 900+ students will begin the new 2021 school year on September 1st on the campus of what was formerly Marshall High School in southeast Portland. This location will be Benson Tech's interim home while the Benson campus on NE 12th Avenue is modernized over the next three years. At the time of publication, the State of Oregon's COVID-19 guidelines for the 2021-2022 school year allow classes to be held in classrooms five days per week, with everyone wearing masks and all teachers, staff and volunteers being fully vaccinated.



**Above:** New signage on the entrance of the former Marshall High School campus, which Benson Tech faculty and staff will call "home" for the next three years while the Benson Tech campus modernization project is under construction. Photo courtesy of Portland Public Schools/Curtis Wilson.

Benson Tech's Principal Curtis Wilson expects about 265 incoming freshmen to join most of the returning 9th, 10th and 11th graders from this past school year. Benson Tech's staff of 75 includes 60 teachers, including a few new teachers coming aboard this upcoming school year (after five retired last June).

In its interim home, Benson Tech will continue all of its career technical education (CTE) programs, albeit in slightly less-spacious and equipped space. A special CTE Annex building is being constructed (adjacent to the main building) to accommodate Benson Tech's automotive, construction and geo-tech programs. It will be ready for use early in the fall semester.

Recognizing the overall disruption that the covid pandemic and comprehensive distance learning has had on students over the past year plus, some special time and effort will be given this fall by teachers and staff to ease students back into a more normal school routine and classroom learning environment.

## Athletics

One of the plus aspects of Marshall is its own athletic fields with stands. Benson Tech intends to start the year competing in all of the Portland Interscholastic League (PIL) men and women sports except football. Football will remain in a "paused state" until fall 2024 when Benson Tech returns to its modernized building. During the three years at Marshall, a revitalized program will be carefully planned and developed.

Workouts for all of the fall sports began on August 16 with a good turnout of athletes.

Tentatively, this year's Homecoming on October 22nd will include both boys' soccer and girls' volleyball. The BPHSAA and the Benson Tech Boosters (for an update on the Boosters, see the article on Page 4) are working with the school to make it a very special event.

## Transportation Problem Resolved

For Benson Tech, which draws students from all over the city, Marshall's less central location has created a potential transportation problem. Many students furthest from Marshall will have extra time-consuming trips on public transportation involving multiple transfers. Generally, PPS expects all high school students to use TriMet bus routes and/or the MAX light rail (or their own personal transportation). To facilitate the use of public transportation PPS has worked out with TriMet to get free student transit passes.

Recognizing the problem, PPS has divided the city into a Red Zone and Green Zone. Benson Tech students living in the Green Zone – essentially the Franklin and Cleveland and most of Grant High School areas ("clusters") will continue using public transportation with their free student transit passes

The Red Zone is essentially the rest of Portland, i.e., Roosevelt, Jefferson, McDaniel (formerly Madison), Lincoln, and Ida B Wells (formerly Wilson) high schools and part of the Grant High School areas. These are areas that have less direct public transportation options to the Marshall campus.

Benson Tech students living in the Red Zone will be able to catch "yellow school buses" at a number of PPS schools within that zone at a specific time to take them directly to and from Marshall. For Benson Tech students involved in extracurricular activities, there will be a "later" bus that will take them to a safe TriMet bus stop close to their homes.



All photos courtesy of GoLloyd.org.

## Benson Tech design students help decorate the NE Lloyd District

Seniors from Benson Tech's Media Design 4 class developed designs to be used on new garbage cans being installed through the Lloyd District. With support from a Benson industry partner (Instrument Design) the student met with [GoLloyd.org's](http://GoLloyd.org) project managers, established client and user needs, worked to specs, and were paid. The work was featured on KOIN 6 and on the [Go Lloyd blog](#).

Another example of truly work-based learning that Benson Tech is known for.



# News from Benson Tech Boosters

By Benson Tech Boosters Lisa Yanase, Director, Amber Johnson, Community Liaison; and Elizabeth O'Malley, School Liaison,

The Benson Tech Boosters' "Ready, Set, Go" Spring Fundraiser was a Tremendous Success thanks to your support!

Thanks to the generosity of Benson Tech alumni Ken Bakke; the Class of 1977; and many more wonderful alumni, teachers, and parents, we were able to double our original goal of \$5,000 and raise over \$10,000 to support our school teams.

Every team received support (based on the number of student athletes). Your support will position Benson Tech student athletes and teams for success at the Marshall campus when school and games return in September 2021.

## Banner Sponsorship Opportunities

Benson's temporary relocation to the Marshall Campus provides us with improved athletic fields and gym space to show our Benson Tech pride through banner sponsorships.

We currently have two options for vinyl banners to be displayed throughout the year for the community to see.

- **3 x 5 Banner Sponsorship Level: \$400** (Keep the banner



in 2022-23 school year for a reduced price of \$325)

- **4 x 8 Banner Sponsorship Level: \$600** (Keep the banner in 2022-23 school year for a reduced price of \$525)

Please contact Amber Johnson at [bensontechboosters@gmail.com](mailto:bensontechboosters@gmail.com) for more information about sponsorship opportunities.

## About the Benson Tech Boosters (BTB)

*Benson Tech Boosters is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to supporting -- and cheering on -- all of Benson Tech women and men athletes and teams as well as working with the BPHSAA to build a stronger Benson Tech community. We are grateful for the past and current support of the alumni. Thank you for investing in the success of Benson Tech student athletes!*

## A CHALLENGE FROM BENSON TECH'S CLASS OF 1977

The Class of 1977 intends to acquire through the Benson Tech Boosters a large banner to be displayed at athletic events to show our support of Benson Tech and its athletes. We challenge other classes to do the same! Contact Amber at [bensontechboosters@gmail.com](mailto:bensontechboosters@gmail.com) for further information.

## Are you a business owner? Would you like to help Benson Tech athletics?

As alumni, we know it is tiring to keep getting asked for donations. However, if you have a business where advertising and name recognition is important, there is an opportunity to place "ad space" at the three-year interim home of Benson Tech on the athletic fields and in the gym. The athletic fields with stands are larger there and will attract more people. The now very active Benson Tech Boosters can assist you placing a banner for your company. Contact Amber Johnson at [bensontechboosters@gmail.com](mailto:bensontechboosters@gmail.com).

## HOW CAN I HELP BTB?

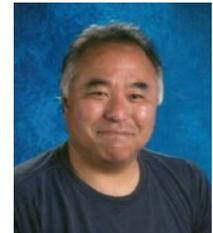
- Join Benson Tech Boosters. Visit [bensontechboosters.org](http://bensontechboosters.org) to see volunteer opportunities!
- Volunteer Boosters are always looking for volunteers. We currently need help with concessions at Marshall Campus, bookkeeping, and web support.
- Help sponsor our teams with a year-round banner at the field and gym!
- Donate funds, goods and/or services.
- Attend a sporting event and cheer for our hard-working athletes! Game dates, times and locations can be found at [www.osaa.org](http://www.osaa.org).
- Community donations, including linking your Fred Meyer Rewards (search for Benson TechBoosters by name or "AX717") and Amazon Smiles Awards - search for "Benson Tech Boosters."



## 100th Tech Show coming up!

Benson Tech will be holding its 100th Tech Show on April 21 and April 22, 2022, in its interim home at the former Marshall High School campus in SE Portland as the original building on NE 12th Avenue, partially financed by Simon Benson, is remodeled. Visitors may miss the “old surroundings,” but the Benson Tech staff and 2021-22 student body are planning an event appropriate to honor this milestone.

The BPHSAA also intends to host a special area and exhibits at Marshall to welcome alumni and their family and friends. If anyone would like to join in the planning of the alumni exhibits and events, email us at [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org).



**Top:** Ed Railey (left) was one of five Benson Tech teachers who retired at the end of 2021.  
**Bottom:** Marisel Gonzalez (left) and Steve Naganuma (right)

## A thank you to Benson Tech’s teachers who retired in 2021

Five Benson Tech teachers were honored and awarded plaques and certificates by Principal Curtis Wilson and other Benson Tech teachers and staff as the 2020-21 school year wound down. The five had between them 115 years of teaching at Benson Tech and other PPS schools.

The BPHSAA wishes to add its thanks for these teachers’ efforts at Benson Tech and best wishes in the years to come to the following:

- Marisel Gonzales (Spanish)
- Markeeta Koch (Qualified Mental Health Practitioner for Benson Tech’s Social Emotional Support Program)
- Steve Naganuma (Radio Broadcasting)
- Ed Railey (Automotive)
- Dave Thompson (Math and Automotive)



**Above:** Groundbreaking ceremony at Benson Tech on August 7, 2021. Photo courtesy of Nathan Swoverland.

## Rob Johns’ speech, continued from front cover

We, the Benson Tech Alumni, feel a special connection to this physical space as it represents the impact on us and thousands of Portland’s kids who grew up here. We respect that legacy of the past! We respect the legacy for many of us alumni having older and younger family members who have also graduated from this school.

We now have a great hope for future generations of young Portlanders to walk through the doors of a

building dedicated to the fundamental beliefs in Career Technical Education and Science Technology Engineering and Math, but with a modern physical space to learn in.

Thank you – to the voters, the citizens, and the Board of Education of Portland Public Schools – for making this day happen, and know that the Benson Tech Alumni will work hard for the future of this school.

## BPHSAA Annual Meeting date set

The Annual Meeting of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA) will be held on November 8, 2021, at which time the main item of business will be to fill a number of Board of Directors' positions.

To be considered for one of these positions, a candidate must attend the annual meeting and may enter their own name for consideration.

Please check the BPHSAA's website at [bensontechalumni.org](http://bensontechalumni.org) later this fall for the location and exact time of the Annual Meeting on November 8.

### Join the BPHSAA!

By becoming a member of the BPHSAA, you are helping to support the Alumni Association's numerous outreach efforts.

These initiatives include maintaining the alumni website and photo archive; disseminating information about class reunions; publishing newsletters; and hosting various social events, such as the Tech Show alumni room and the annual Benson Tech Community Picnic (typically held in August).

The BPHSAA also continues to advocate on behalf of the school, its students, staff, and distinct programs, serving as a visible and vocal presence within PPS and in the city at large.

Visit [bensontechalumni.org](http://bensontechalumni.org) for more information!



**Top:** Members of Benson Tech's Class of 2021 gathered for an in-person graduation ceremony at Providence Park in downtown Portland to celebrate their achievement on June 7, 2021. The BPHSAA proudly salutes Benson Tech's 2021 graduates. Photo courtesy of Portland Public Schools/Curtis Wilson.

## Alumni scholarships awarded

Three alumni-funded scholarships totaling over \$5,000 were awarded at Benson Tech's date "virtual" award assembly, with one-year scholarships funded by the Benson Tech Alumni Scholarship Fund awarded to three seniors:

- **Miguel Morgan**, an electric major, plans on attending Portland Community College (PCC) this fall before entering into a journeyman electrician apprenticeship.
- **Kimanh Nguyen**, a media design major, plans to attend PCC to obtain an associate transfer degree to eventually get a bachelor's degree in business marketing, education or design
- **Jack Toczka**, a computer science major, plans to attend PCC to obtain an associate transfer degree to eventually get a bachelor's degree in computer science and logistics.

The BPHSAA wishes each of them well in the next phase of their studies and welcomes them to the larger community of Benson Tech graduates!

Rachael Lizo Katzen Kurynny, from the BPHSAA's Scholarship Committee participated (for the first time) in committee deliberations to pick this year's scholarship recipients.

If you'd like to contribute toward next year's scholarships, it is easy! Go to the [MyOCF Oregon Community Foundations online donation system](#). It can also be accessed via the [BPHSAA website](#) in the [Scholarship Fund Section](#), which also includes information on how to donate by check. Remember that even a small gift to the Alumni's Scholarship Fund is a gift that keeps giving!

# THANK YOU!



### Recent Scholarship Fund Supporters

A special thank you to the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund since January 1, 2021

- Roger Edwards
- United Way of the Columbia Willamette
- Gary Manchester and Nancy Zieg



## REUNION INFORMATION

### CLASS OF 1992 - 30th Reunion

**WHEN:** Friday, August 5 and Saturday August 6, 2022

**WHAT:** Friday evening, adults-only gathering, 6pm

**WHERE:** McMenamins Edgefield (2126 SW Halsey Street, Troutdale, 97060)

**WHAT:** Saturday afternoon all-ages BBQ, 2pm

**WHERE:** Blue Lake Park (1224 NE Blue Lake Road, Fairview, 97024)

Tickets via Eventbrite (search "Benson High School Class of 1992"). Additional info on [the Class of 1992 Facebook page](#).

### CLASS OF 2000 - 20+2 Reunion

**WHEN:** Saturday, August 6th, 2022

**WHAT:** Adults-only gathering, 7pm

**WHERE:** Punch Bowl Social (340 SW Morrison Street, #4305, Portland 97204)

Questions and ticket info: Contact Julie Jorgensen at [Bensonhs2000@yahoo.com](mailto:Bensonhs2000@yahoo.com). Look for additional details on the Benson Polytechnic Class of 2000 Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/145634978650>.

### CLASS OF 1997 - 25th Reunion

The Class of 1997 is in the early stages of planning an informal, family-friendly, 25th reunion to be held the summer of 2022.

Interested in helping with the event? Contact Jerod Huth at [JerodHuth@outlook.com](mailto:JerodHuth@outlook.com). For updates, please join the class of 1997 Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/458673384324100>.

### CLASS OF 1971 - 50th Reunion

Due to COVID, the Class of 1971's 50th reunion has been postponed until spring/summer 2022. For questions, or to request reunion-related email updates, contact Gene Nelson at: [Benson.Tech71@gmail.com](mailto:Benson.Tech71@gmail.com).

To connect with your old friends and get up-to-date details regarding reunion plans, join the Benson Tech '71 Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Benson.Tech71/>.

Is your class planning a reunion, or did the pandemic force a planned event to be rescheduled? If so, please contact [info@bensontechalumni.org](mailto:info@bensontechalumni.org) with the relevant details about your reunion, or any changes to the previously planned event, including:

- **WHAT** (the nature of the events—adults-only, families welcome, etc.)
- **WHEN**
- **WHERE**
- **COST/HOW TO** purchase tickets
- **CONTACT INFO** for organizer(s)
- **EVENT WEBSITE/FACEBOOK PAGE** (if applicable)

We post announcements about upcoming reunions on the BPHSAA website ([bensontechalumni.org](http://bensontechalumni.org)) and in our newsletters.

## Volunteers needed!

### Looking for near-peer mentors for Benson Tech building construction students

Building construction instructors Luke Hotchkiss (Class of 2000) and Dave Ketah are seeking up to a dozen "near-peer mentors" to work with next year's juniors and seniors. Ideal candidates are in their 20s or 30s, are actively employed in the construction field, and are able to commit to volunteering for at least one class period, once per week, for the duration of the 2021/22 school year.

To establish a rapport with Benson Tech students, mentors will be assigned to a specific cohort; this will also provide students the opportunity to develop relationships with, and receive personalized guidance from, these professionals from the construction industry.

The City of Portland awarded the building construction department a small grant targeted at increasing the representation of women, minorities, and economically disadvantaged workers in the construction trades. These funds \*may\* be available to help offset the cost to organizations of employee time lost.

If you are able to serve as a near-peer mentor at Benson Tech, or know of someone who is willing to help, please contact Luke Hotchkiss at [lhotchkiss@pps.net](mailto:lhotchkiss@pps.net).

*For updates about the building construction program at Benson Tech and information on projects, follow @bphs\_construction on Instagram.*