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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), February 2014 Edition



Let's put Benson Tech on the next PPS bond measure

*by Richard K. Spies, (Class of '64), chair,
Benson Tech Design Center Advisory Group*

Work is underway to select the next round of schools to be modernized within the Portland Public Schools District and Benson Tech has an excellent chance of being in that group. The next bond will most likely go in front of the voters in the November 2016 election. A new vision for Benson Tech that includes an updated array of CTE (Career Technical Education) programs that directly supplies technically trained workers for the Pacific Northwest will be a compelling story for this next bond measure.

During this next year, there will be preplanning for those next schools so that a detailed story of what they are all about can be told to voters as the election approaches.

Industry and business partners will be crucial to the success of this approach. Benson Tech supporters are needed now to help craft the new vision for what the school could be. The newly organized Benson Tech Design Center Advisory Group is an example of how business and industry representatives can help inform what a new curriculum should include to meet changing needs. This will be critical in helping Benson graduates take

that important first step toward exciting careers in the world of design and construction.

Other areas, such as health occupation, manufacturing, and communications will also be adding to their advisor and stakeholder networks to update curriculum. These advisory groups will be working with Benson Tech, district administrators and staff, and students and parents to help shape the most powerful programs possible.

The future looks bright for Benson Tech and we urge any of you who are interested to get involved and help make Benson the nation's finest technical high school.

Find more news and information at www.bensontechalumni.org.

Student-built house project is on track

by Richard K. Spies (Class of '64)

Work continues on with the next Benson Tech student-built house. Located just north of the last home completed in May 2012, it includes three bedrooms, 2.5 baths, and laundry facilities on each of its two floors. It features a large open kitchen, dining, and living room area that opens on to a yard containing a large tree that dominates the corner of N. Skidmore and Mallory streets. The house will contain numerous energy features, such as radiant concrete floors, structural insulated roof panels, rain screen exterior wall treatment, and low-flow toilets and fixtures. Ryan Shanahan with Earth Advantage is helping with the various sustainability strategies, which include Energy Smart, and LEED® certifications.

Exterior work is moving along well and interior electrical and plumbing will soon be the focus. Sheet rock and interior trim will begin shortly after that work is finalized. Detailed layouts for the cabinets are being reviewed by Kelly Dobbs at Neil Kelly and will be constructed in the fall.

The students have been doing a fantastic job under Rich Weber's leadership. Rich has also done a great job of recruiting excellent community support for the project in the form of donated time, materials or discounted pricing. Some of the companies and individuals that helped out on the project include:

- ABC Supply
- Better Bids Concrete
- Cascade Raydon
- Earth Advantage



- Forti Fiber Building Systems Group
- Green Structures Northwest
- Lakeside Lumber
- Mackenzie
- Malarkey Roofing
- Milgard Windows
- Neil Kelly
- Oregon Roofers Union
- Parr Lumber
- Pat's Pound and Pour Concrete
- Precision Images-Printing
- Rayburn Plumbing
- Richard K. Spies, A.I.A.
- The Heat Exchange
- Tight Access Excavation
- Tuff Stuff - concrete floor finishers
- West Side Electric
- Z-Tech Engineering

The house continues the tradition of showcasing Benson Tech students' skills and community support of the school.

Work is currently underway to form a robust Design Center at Benson Tech that will focus on architecture, urban design, sustainability, engineering and product design. An advisory group is starting work on creating a detailed vision of what would be included in this program, but it would certainly include student design participation.

As a Benson Tech alum (Class of '64), I was proud to help with the design of the current house, but would prefer to give the students the opportunity to be the designers, as they have been in the past. Hopefully, this will happen with an emerging design and construction-oriented curriculum in the near future.

In the meantime, I urge you all to go by and see the Benson House at the corner of N. Skidmore and Mallory streets.

Benson Tech grad returns to lead boys basketball team

Earl Clark (Class of '95) was hired in October 2013 to lead Benson Tech's boys basketball team. Clark worked as an assistant under former Benson Tech coaches Don Emry and Troy Berry before taking La Salle to the 4A state quarterfinals in 2007. Clark takes the reigns as the Techmen move up to the 5A classification this year and possibly to 6A next year.



PPS raises Benson Tech's enrollment cap

Benson Tech had more publicity in 2013 about the enrollment cap placed upon it in 2010 since the cap was put in place. Alumni efforts helped. Having seen hundreds of students turned away in both 2012 and 2013, **Rob Johns** (BPHSAA chair and president of the newly created Benson Tech Foundation) believed it was time to build traction in the private sector to gain support for increasing enrollment, citing Benson Tech's graduation statistics— which exceed any other PPS high school across all minority groups— and unique CTE offerings as compelling reasons. Rob reached out to manufacturers and unions in March 2013, obtaining signed support letters to “lift the cap.” Two appearances before the PPS School Board in March 2013, and a number of favorable reports and articles across multiple channels of local media, heightened the message to individual PPS School Board members.

In 2013, 10 additional freshmen slots were opened for an allowance of 260. After more meetings over the summer and working with PPS on submitting a “Benson Forward” program for consideration for an Oregon Department of Education CTE Grant, the enrollment issue gained more traction. Due to the PPS School Board Resolution passed on Jan. 27, 2014, Benson Tech will be allowed another 15 freshmen slots over and above the 235 cap from 2013. In addition, there is a rather open arrangement to be developed further to allow sophomores and possibly juniors to transfer into Benson Tech from their neighborhood schools. Any upward increase is a win for Portland students, providing more opportunity to benefit from Benson Tech's excellent CTE programs and facilities.

A fresh start for Benson Tech's Career Counseling Center

by Don Wear (Class of '76), BPHSAA board member

In February 2013, **Amy Henry**, the director of Benson Tech's Counseling Center approached BPHSAA Chairman **Rob Johns** for help in remodeling the center. Amy had an architectural designer, Deborah Wash, on hand to implement her vision for the center, but the Portland Public Schools District did not have the funds to pay the designer's fee. Deborah Wash offered to donate part of her fee and the BPHSAA stepped in to cover the rest, using the extra funds to cover other needed supplies and equipment.

The first step was gutting the existing counseling center. Amy and the BPHSAA went to work recruiting volunteers and scheduling the demolition and subsequent remodeling work, which would take place over the 2013 summer break. After the District learned of these efforts, it offered to fund the demolition and put out a bid for the remodel, excluding the painting portion. Alumni and other volunteers did most of the prep work for and helped with the final painting. The Career Counseling Center remodel was finished on the August 19, 2013 for the 2013-2014 school year.



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Scholarship fund benefits three Benson Tech seniors

Your donations funded nearly \$3,500 in scholarships to three Benson Tech seniors in 2013. **Ryan Girres**, an automotive major, will use his share to study business at Mt. Hood Community College. **Greely Guinn**, while studying communications at Benson, has elected to pursue general studies at Portland Community College. **Isabela Gomez** will continue her focus on health occupations by studying medicine at Portland Community College. Congratulations to Ryan, Greely and Isabela!

The Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Scholarship Fund was started in 1990 by the Class of 1950, using the leftover funds from their 40th reunion. In 2007, the scholarship fund came under the purview of the BPHSAA. Donations are handled by the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF), which invests, administers and distributes the funds. Each year, the interest income is available for scholarship awards to graduating seniors selected by a panel of Benson faculty.

Students are automatically considered for our scholarship and many others once they have completed the Oregon Student Access Commission's (OSAC) combined scholarship application.

Lloyd District to be redefined with help of Benson Tech alum

Architect **Kyle Anderson** (Class of '86) is part of a team of developers and architects who are re-imagining a four-block area of the Lloyd District. The team hopes to transform what is largely a 9-to-5 business park into a robust urban neighborhood. Along the way, they expect to achieve several LEED certifications. According to a report filed by OPB's Rob Manning, there are even plans to re-use all of the site's wastewater, potentially sending treated water through a filtering system and back to underground aquifers.



Strike up the band!

Benson Tech has lost its band program.

The BPHSAA has created an Alumni Pep Band to help fill in that gap. We have played many sports events during the last three seasons and we're having a ball. We are actively recruiting musicians to join our ranks. Alums, current Benson Tech students, family, friends ... all are welcome!

You can get more information, and read a few articles about the Pep Band on the BPHSAA website (www.bensontechalumni.org)

We hope to see you. Go Tech!

2014 Alumni Calendar of Events

Feb 13 - 14 - Benson Tech Show
Feb 13 - BPHSAA Annual Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

BPHSAA meetings
Benson Tech Library, 5:30–7:30 p.m.
March 10
April 14
May 12
June 9

Benson Community Annual
BPHSAA Picnic
August 16 - 12:00–4:00 p.m., Benson
Tech High School

State of the School Address
Principal Curtis Wilson
Every third Wednesday, old Band
Room, Benson Tech, 5:30 p.m.
All supporters welcome.

For the latest information on upcoming events, visit the BPHSAA website at www.bensontechalumni.org.

New 5-Year Plan for Benson Tech

Since September 2012, the Benson Tech Site Council has been working to draft a 5-year plan for the school. Divided into three parts — Instruction, Community Building and Development — the plan's objective is to support Benson Tech's mission as a focus-option school and to focus the variety of current and anticipated efforts on the school's highest priority needs. Through the hard work and support of school administrators, teachers and alumni, this groundbreaking plan was completed and adopted in December 2013.

To view the new 5-year plan for Benson Tech, visit <http://www.bensontechalumni.org/2014/02/10/benson5yearplan/>.

Reunion planners take note

Benson grads thinking about holding a class reunion should become familiar with the BPHSAA website (www.bensontechalumni.org). There are several features there that can help with the planning. A simple announcement can alert classmates that plans are underway, and can attract committee members to help with the work. Comments can be added to the initial post to show progress in organizing the reunion. The website supports social media communications to extend its reach to a wide range of computer users.



By selecting a reunion date adjacent to the BPHSAA All Class Annual Picnic, reunion committees can expand their agendas without incurring more planning tasks. The slower pace of the picnic allows reunion night conversations to develop further, and including a second reunion event can increase the incentive to attend for out-of-town classmates. The website can display reunion photos that capture memories of the proceedings and offer a glimpse of the event to the people who could not attend.

Saying farewell to old friends: a reverent reason to stop by the Tech Show Alumni Room

Unlike other high schools, Benson Tech students and graduates have just a small chance of running into many classmates at the neighborhood grocery or pizza parlor. The difficulty of keeping track of former high school chums at magnet schools like Benson Tech provides a special attraction for the BPHSAA. The BPHSAA annual picnic and the Tech Show Alumni Room provide defined opportunities for alumni to reconnect. While there is no certainty that an old acquaintance will be there to greet you, both events display the obituaries of classmates and faculty who will not. The collection is by no means complete, but most of us are sure to find a name we recall among the 1,200+ entries. The list continues to grow and is indexed by year of birth. Searches for missing names can be requested at either event.