



WINTER 2015

Sporting Success!

A lot has been happening in the world of sport already this term, and not just in our sports hall!

Seventeen brave students have taken part in water sport activities at Edgbaston Reservoir. The project is part of a Sport Birmingham project funded by Sportivate with sessions running over a six week period.

Students and staff attended weekly sessions where they got to experience a range of activities, including the occasional speedy thrill aboard the safety boat, whilst being coached by experienced sailing instructors.

Everyone had a great time, with 'Storm Abigail' making an appearance at one of the sessions. The group will return in Spring next year for phase two of the project.

A team of 11 students were selected to be 'The QAC Challengers' and played in the Regional CP Sports Table Cricket Competition held at Edgbaston Cricket Ground. Although they lost all of their first round matches, they came back fighting in the second round to come third overall; a great achievement!



The team will practice their skills over the next few months in our Table Cricket Club before competing in The Lord's Taverners Table Cricket Competition in February.

Closer to home, our Judo Club has gone from strength to strength, and a donation from Zurich enabled it to continue this year. 21 students attend the weekly club, delivered by Jason Allen, a British and Commonwealth Champion. In November we held a grading presentation to award them their belts ranging from red to yellow to orange.

The ceremony allowed students to showcase their technical ability, understanding and knowledge of Japanese terminology in front of fellow students, families and other guests.

A Word from Hugh



Hugh J Williams
Principal

Many thanks to QAC supporters for your individual and organisational support or partnership work with the College over the last 12 months. The past year has seen continued pressure on funds due to legislative changes to SEN education.

As well as this, DWP's commissioning arrangements for employment related programmes have changed significantly, impacting on us greatly. We rely on donations, fundraising, in-kind support and partnership working with many public and charitable organisations to continue our services.

We enjoy diverse relationships through our curriculum and corporate partnerships, from links through QAC Enterprises through to employers' interest in providing work experience and internships. We do not underestimate the value of the contact we share with other individuals and organisations.

Thank you to everyone for your role in ensuring QAC students' experiences are rewarding and enriched through the links we have with you, our supporters. We hope you get as much from it as we do.

I wish all of QAC's supporters a Happy Christmas and a very prosperous New Year 2016.

Hugh.

Employment Pathways

Our Employment Pathways team have been very busy this term.

Students on our Supported Internship programme have had the opportunity to work in a range of roles with employers including National Grid in Solihull, The Co-Op in Stirchley and Edgbaston Cricket Ground.

The team organised 'Work Experience Week' in October. A number of employers came to talk to QAC students about their work and some groups were lucky enough to visit employers across the city. We also welcomed students from St Paul's Community Trust School who visited our newly refurbished Trade Skills department to learn tiling skills.

We would like to say a big thank you to the companies who supported us including Cadbury, The Burlington Hotel, Quinton Police, Woodgate Valley Fire, Willmott Dixon and Birmingham Art Gallery & Museum. A big well done to all students who took part too!



Highlights

Manchester School Games



Holbeache Farm



Children in Need Day



Stratford Visit



Trade Skills



NEC Skills Show

Winter Woolly Day



SEPTEMBER

The 2015/16 academic year began and as well as seeing familiar faces return, we also welcomed many who were new to the QAC Community. As part of this we introduced three new PFL groups; so hello to PFL Amber, PFL Bronze and PFL Grey!

At the start of term a group of Sport students and staff volunteered at the Sainsbury's National School Games in Manchester. After training on the first day they did a number of different jobs at venues across the city. As well as working hard, the group also visited a number of landmarks, watched the opening ceremony and met Paralympian Hannah Cockroft.

Following successful fundraising, we have been able to develop our Trade Skills area to include three 'work bays' for students to practice tiling and decorating skills. The department is also equipped with a range of professional tools and materials to enhance students' experiences.

OCTOBER

Four students went on a trip to Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford as part of their English studies. They attended a lecture on the dramatic effects of some scenes in Romeo & Juliet, a multi-media artefact exhibition and visited the house where Shakespeare was born. Students have used the trip to help with their studies on Romeo & Juliet and in writing their own work.

A group of IP clients visited the Birmingham Hippodrome to see 'Annie' the musical. They had a great view and an amazing time, singing along with the cast!

Ten students visited Holbeache Farm in Kidderminster where they helped feed animals, learned about health and safety on a farm and polished brass buckles for show shire horses as part of their work experience.

NOVEMBER

Pudsey Power came to QAC with students and staff getting involved in fundraising activities for Children in Need. Hospitality students served a range of delicious treats (including Pudsey cookies!), raising over £165; PFL Silver sold handmade crafts raising almost £20 and our annual 'Penny Trail' organised by PFL Green lined the Bradbury Centre, raising a record £236. Money was still being counted well into November, with the total nudging towards £500 which is fantastic! Well done to everyone involved!

Brandhall Community Choir returned to QAC to perform for our IP and Residential students. Students, clients and staff joined the singing with many a well known song and carol being sung before everyone enjoyed a festive treat and chat.

Some IP clients and staff joined Hugh, our Principal, at a meeting at St. Germain's Church in Edgbaston. The group represented QAC and presented to over 50 people, speaking about the work of QAC, including Independence Plus and our various Social Enterprises. They did a great job, and really enjoyed the experience.

A team of students and staff exhibited at the Skills Show, held at the NEC. The show is the UK's leading experiential skills and career show for young people. Our team was asked to demonstrate a skill which the College teaches and the team chose to focus their attention on visual impairment, sharing skills and personal experience with visitors. They also had a range of equipment available to show what they use when working with students to develop their independent living skills.



Trampolining Club

Following recent funding from Sportivate, we began our widely anticipated trampolining project. 20 students attended the first taster session, which will be followed by a further seven sessions. We are very lucky to be working with Deb Danks, Head Coach at local trampolining club Activ8.

DECEMBER

Festive knits, Santa hats, crafts and hyacinth planters were abound as the PFL Christmas Fayre took over the hall and Bradbury Centre. Everyone got into the spirit of Winter Woolly Day, donning a range of festive attire for the occasion.

The festive fun continued as PFL groups amazed audiences in their 'Wizard of Oz' themed Christmas Show and Performing Arts students dazzled in their rendition of 'Oliver'!



Spotlight

AQA Unlocking Potential

In our last newsletter we mentioned how two students had been chosen to take part in the AQA Unlocking Potential Programme in conjunction with the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust.

The programme aims to help make a positive impact on the lives of the nominees, encouraging them to help others and aim high in life. Being selected to take part is an amazing achievement, only 40 young people from across the UK were chosen.

For the programme, participants are matched with high achieving athletes who will mentor and guide them throughout their project. Although George Coleman left QAC in the summer, student Zach Brookes has continued to work with Mikail Huggins (Paralympic guide runner), his mentor for the project.

Zach chose a project focussing on education about transexual issues, something very close to his heart. As part of this he delivered a presentation to almost 30 students and staff about his journey, and to over 100 people at The Big Lottery about how to work with people who are transexual. He also spoke about his project at a celebratory event in December.

Throughout the process Zach has shown a great deal of passion, enjoying the challenge. Mikail also got a lot from the experience, commenting "I'm proud of Zach, working with him has made me develop in many ways, he is an inspiration".



Mikail and Zach



Powerchair Football

Elite Powerchair Football comes to QAC

We are delighted to be working with The Albion Foundation to deliver the first collaborative Powerchair Football and Further Education Elite study programme of its kind in the whole country, exclusively for high need students, starting in September 2016.

The programme has been specifically designed for ambitious young sports people with high needs aged 16-24 years old who are passionate about football, coaching and sports leadership, use a power or manual wheelchair and are eligible under the Federation of International Powerchair Football Association (FIPFA) classification criteria.

Offering students the opportunity to develop as powerchair football players, they will train for twelve hours per week (the recommended time to become an elite performer) plus attend QAC for a timetabled programme of vocational qualifications, independence, employment and functional skills.

For more information about the academic and funding element of the programme contact Beverley Jessop on 0121 428 5050. For more about the elite sport element contact Paul Hunt at paul.hunt@albionfoundation.co.uk

QAC Out and About

Our Marketing team has been very busy developing external links already this academic year, representing QAC at various conferences and events both locally and nationally.

QAC continues to be high on the list as a potential place of study for many young people and their families with increasing demand for places each year. We have welcomed lots of families to College 'Open Days', allowing them to discover for themselves the friendly atmosphere, great resources and supportive staff and students we have here. They can also ask questions and seek advice before making an application.

Similarly, our 'Information Day' events allow professionals to visit QAC to discover more about us. They continue to be extremely popular and we have delivered to over 100 delegates during 2015.

For more information about 2016 events please look on our website or contact 0121 428 5041.

N.E.E.D. National Employer Engagement Database

The NEED Project is an exciting new project, started here at QAC that aims to encourage large national employers to help more young people with learning disabilities into paid employment.

The project is going from strength to strength and we have recently expanded our team as a result. We are now working with several Local Authorities to help develop Supported Internship programmes, again helping more young people to find work.

We work with many large employers to help them understand how their recruitment processes could be changed to help more people with disabilities to not only find work but also to find fulfilling career development.

Our current partner employers include Marks and Spencer, The BBC, Odeon Cinemas and Sealife Centres.

We have ambitious plans for the project moving forwards and are looking for more people to help us deliver. We need people with project management skills who feel as strongly as we do about getting more young people with learning disabilities into employment and would be able to work for a number of days each year delivering our message and methodology to help employers gain the knowledge and confidence they need to diversify their workforce and support all their employees.

If this sounds like you please get in touch with Jem Jones on 07824 901833. For more information about the NEED Project please visit www.theneedproject.org.uk



Spotlight

QAC Stakeholder Feedback

We take a great deal of pride in what we do and as part of that continually monitor the quality of provision and experiences for students and stakeholders.

Each year we ask them to input into our review. Below are some highlights from the 2014/15 report.

Student Success
Students achieving their main learning aim 88%
Up 1% on previous academic year.

Student Satisfaction
Overall student satisfaction was 98%
Up by 5% on the 2014 survey.

Student Destinations
56 students left in July 2015 and progressed to positive destinations this included:
29 % went onto Further Education
Up by 3% on previous academic year.
13% gained voluntary employment
Up by 1% on previous academic year.
23% went onto another QAC programme.

Employer Engagement
Overall 'Employer Satisfaction' 91 % rated QAC as good or outstanding, Up by 5% on the previous year (2013/14)
Employers told us: "Staff communicated very well and gave us good guidance on the needs students. They also supported the students and treated them with respect - giving them the confidence to improve their skills" and "Client X started here as a work placement, he worked really hard and made such an impression that he is now one of our employees".

Student Retention
98% of students were retained on their course; the same as for the previous academic year.

Inspection Outcomes
Ofsted Learning & Skills Inspection 'Overall Effectiveness' grade
June 2011 Inspection Grade = Good (2)

Teaching and Learning
College KPI - 85% of lessons at or above expected professional standard (outstanding or good)
94.5% for the academic year (including round 1&2)
Up by 11.5% on last academic year.

Parent Engagement

Overall 'Parent Satisfaction' was 93% which is up 1% on previous academic year.

One parent said: "QAC has offered my daughter structure. She is progressing well not only educationally but also socially. For the first time since being in education she feels comfortable which is all down to QAC staff".

A big thank you to everyone who contributed to our review. An even bigger thank you, and well done, to all QAC staff for their continued support and hard work in providing our students with an enjoyable and positive experience.

IP Sporting Superstars

It seems we have a couple of sporting stars in our IP community...

Tehseen Meghani recently took part in the City of Birmingham Special Olympics Final in Erdington. She entered four competitions across different sports, winning two gold, one silver and one bronze medals which is fantastic!

Tyrone Williams regularly competes in the CP Games and represented England in the World Games competition, winning gold in javelin and silver in shot put. The week long event was an amazing experience for Tyrone, despite the early starts and intense training, as he got to enjoy the atmosphere at the opening and closing ceremonies and medal presentations. He's now back in training and looking forward to travelling to Spain to defend his title in the competition next year!

A big well done to both Tehseen and Tyrone for their hard work and passion for their sport.



Tehseen Meghani



Tyrone Williams



Student Specials at Coffee Junction



Umberslade Harvest

Seasonal Enterprises

Staff and customers at Coffee Junction and Umberslade Nurseries have been extremely busy in recent months.

The team at Coffee Junction got into the 'spirit' of Halloween by hosting a Halloween party with spooky food, fancy dress and various 'trick or treat' games. Everyone had a brilliant time and raised over £70 in the raffle.

Our Hospitality students have been making the most out of our professional kitchen at Coffee Junction, creating delicious 'Student Specials' to be served, including Sticky Toffee Pudding, Chocolate Brownie Trifle and Apple and Cinnamon Pie. Yum!

Umberslade has been just as busy with their Halloween Fun Day; ghosts, ghouls and other fiendish characters joined the fancy dress fun before pumpkin carving, nature trails and scavenger hunts took place. A big thank you to all who came along, especially the team of DWP volunteers who helped out on the day.

Students have also been busy harvesting, bagging and selling produce at College. Potatoes, tomatoes and sweetcorn are just some of the crops that have been harvested since September.

Following successful fundraising endeavours, there will be various new projects taking place at Umberslade in 2016, including the development of a new sensory and therapy garden and horticulture workshops for people with dementia, so please keep looking at our website for more information.

Events

Fundraising

Team QAC successes were abound at the start of the year! Congratulations to our three brave skydivers, including QAC's Alex, who took part in this year's tandem skydive in September. Excitement and adrenalin were abound, along with a few nerves, as they donned their jump suits and took to the skies, raising around £500 in funds to support QAC's work.

A very well done to Claire, Gaynor, Colin, Jonathan and Karolina - our 'Team QAC' runners who took part in the Morrisons Great Birmingham Run in October. Following from success in the 10K event in May (plaques are now proudly on display in the Fitness Centre) the team did fantastically, with everyone completing the run in under two hours twenty minutes! A big thank you to everyone who supported and sponsored the team, helping them beat our fundraising target of £200!

In November, over 60 guests took part in our Dinner in the Dark event, this time hosted at The Burlington Hotel. Plunged into darkness for the duration of their meal, diners thoroughly enjoyed the event, with many saying how they had no idea how much they took their sight for granted in everyday life and were in awe at people they know who are visually impaired. For our very own 'Blind Dave' Heeley, it was the perfect opportunity to challenge friends and colleagues to live a couple of hours in his life, but without the running shoes, and also offer a couple of anecdotes along the way. A big thank you to everyone who came and supported the event.

The first Saturday in December brought festive shoppers out in force as we held our annual Christmas Craft and Gift Fayre. Loyal stallholders returned, along with many new faces, as visitors perused the numerous crafts and gifts that were on offer. Peter's Puppets were on-hand with a couple of festive performances. Umberlade were there too, selling Christmas trees and other festive items, as were Coffee Junction who were serving refreshments. A big thank you to everyone who came along and made it a success.

The Fundraising Team are working hard to plan events for 2016 and already have some exciting ones in the pipeline; from a Family Fun Day and sporting challenge in April to our Summer Fete in June.

We are also looking for people to join 'Team QAC' and take part in various events including runs, skydives and 24 hour challenges. More information will hit our website and social network pages in due course, but if you are interested then please contact Coralie Hudson at chudson@qac.ac.uk



DWP Christmas Volunteers



Christmas Craft Fayre

Corporate & Community

A big thank you to our corporate supporters who have been keen to get involved with us already this academic year. We have had two teams of DWP volunteers join the fun, with one joining the fun at Umberlade's Halloween Fun Day and the other group getting festive working with students at the PFL Christmas Fayre.

Barclays Wealth and Tyndallwoods Solicitors have also joined the festive fun, running Christmas Chocolate Hamper raffles to raise money for us. Employees at Barclays Wealth also hosted a Winter Woolly dressdown day to raise more funds.

We would like to say thank you to all of the companies that have made in-kind donations to a variety of projects and events including Lego, Grafix, Grumpy Mule, Sainsbury's Harborne, Waitrose Harborne and Fentimans.

As ever a big well done and thank you to everyone who gets involved in our events, and supports us; whether you are a participant, spectator, donor or volunteer we really appreciate it! If you would like to know more about how you can get involved in supporting us, please contact fundraising@qac.ac.uk



'Team QAC' Skydive



'Team QAC' Runners



Dinner in the Dark



Dinner in the Dark



DWP Halloween Volunteers @ Umberlade



QAC Enterprises consists of a wide range of businesses that raise money for College and provide excellent work opportunities for students.

The Enterprises also promote good practice in disability employment and many offer students work placements in real-life establishments, enhancing their learning experiences.

If you would like to know more about them please contact the team directly or contact: cdarling@qac.ac.uk



We provide a specialist service transcribing documents into alternative formats (Braille, Large Print, Audio) for people with a visual impairment.

Contact us on 0121 428 5018



QAC is the UK distributor of acclaimed Revolution Carbon Fibre Canes which are lighter in weight and more durable than traditional aluminium canes.

Contact us on 0121 428 5041

Conference & Training Facilities available for hire

We have excellent conference and training facilities available to hire, including Sports Hall.

Contact us on 0121 428 5041



Open to QAC students and the local community, we are a fully equipped commercial gym designed to meet the needs of everyone including wheelchair users and people with limited mobility as well as able bodied members. Flexible membership options are available.

Contact us on 0121 428 5010



COFFEE JUNCTION

We are a family friendly café in Bearwood that offers a range of quality teas, coffees and food. Young people with disabilities also have the chance to gain valuable skills working in the and the fully equipped training kitchen upstairs. We are also available to hire for small parties.

Contact us on 0121 420 1990



Based in Bearwood, we offer a wide range of bicycles, spares, accessories and clothing for all aspects of cycling. The fully trained team also provide expert maintenance and repair services keeping your bike in first-rate condition.

Contact us on 0121 428 5040



Located in Selly Oak, we are a rural idyll in an urban setting comprising of a small retail outlet, the 'Potting Shed' tea rooms & various horticultural facilities for hire.

Contact us on 0121 472 4894



QAC Sight Village events are the UK's leading exhibitions of technology, equipment and support services for people with visual impairment and for people experiencing age related sight problems. Events are free to attend and we hope to see you there.

**Edinburgh
26th April**

**Glasgow
27th April**

**Birmingham
19/20th July**

**Leeds
29th September**

**London
1st/2nd November**



Autism Central showcases a range of products and services, with a full programme of workshops and seminars throughout the day. Entry is free and a full range of presentations will take place.

**Villa Park, Birmingham
11th October**

**Queen Alexandra College, Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9TG
Tel: 0121 428 5050 E-mail: info@qac.ac.uk
Registered Charity No. 1065794 Registered in England No. 3387540**

For more information about what is happening at QAC and our Enterprises, and how you can get involved, visit www.qac.ac.uk or follow us on Twitter & Facebook.



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