



## COFFEE JUNCTION OPENS!



**October saw the opening of QAC's new enterprise; situated on Bearwood High Street, next to our very own iCycle, Coffee Junction brings a fresh, family friendly café experience to the local community.**

The café was officially opened by local chef Steve Love, whose restaurant 'Loves' was recently voted into the UK's top 100 restaurants. Steve took time out of his busy schedule to come along and speak with staff and customers before cutting the ribbon and declaring the café open. Manager, Ismail Orel, was thrilled to welcome Steve along to the launch saying "the team are extremely proud of Coffee Junction, so it is an honour that Steve could come and support us". Guests were treated to samples of what will be on offer, with a range of drinks and sweet treats including chocolate brownies and macaroons.

The project has been ongoing for a long time and is the result of a successful fundraising bid to the Demographic Growth Capital Fund (DGCF). As well as being a popular coffee shop the site offers training opportunities for young people with disabilities. This is possible because the second floor of the unit is a fully equipped state of the art training kitchen.



Jodie Burkin, Hospitality Tutor at QAC says "to have such a professional kitchen for our students to work in is fantastic, it really gives them a feel for working in the Hospitality industry". On looking around, Steve was impressed with the facilities and it is hoped that QAC students and staff will be able to work with him in the future.

Since the official opening the café has also seen the introduction of 'Coffee Jungle', an interactive play and reading area for toddlers, complete with furry and feathered friends. Already popular with local residents, this adds another element to the Coffee Junction experience, making it fun and welcoming for customers of all ages.

Since opening, the café has become a social media star on Bearwood Blog and 'We Love Bearwood' and has proved to be a popular meeting venue in the local community with more people visiting each week. Ismail and the team are really excited to be at the heart of Bearwood life and look forward to welcoming new customers through the doors.



## A Word from the Principal



**Hugh J Williams**

This winter newsletter features some of the events and activities that our staff and students have been involved with since September 2013. Everyone has worked very hard contributing to the success of the College and students' learning has been significantly enhanced as a result. They have delivered confident presentations to a full house at Autism Central, contributed to the Student Council and taken part enthusiastically in fundraising initiatives. Learning about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion themes this term has included Black History Month, Birmingham Disability Sports Festival, Bright 4 Sight and Guide Dogs.

I, personally, have been very busy in political campaigning to ensure the needs of current and future students and clients continue to be met and the impact of Government cuts and policies does not threaten the multi-disciplinary education, training and holistic support that QAC provides.

The College could not deliver its excellent service to our beneficiaries against this backdrop without the support of its Governors, staff, volunteers, parents, families, corporate sponsors and donors. This support is essential and has, over the year, seen us develop and expand our provision. This academic year will see us start our Sports Hall building work which will be an excellent new facility.

Thank you so much for your commitment to our charity and I wish you well for Christmas and the New Year 2014.

**Hugh.**

## Highlights



QAC is a member of Birmingham Disability Sports Forum (BDSF), working to increase sporting opportunities for people with disabilities across the city. October half term saw the partnership's first 'Sports Fest' week with a range of activities being held across Birmingham. QAC were proud to attend the launch event at Alexander Stadium where students had the opportunity to chat with Paralympian Claire Cashmore (winner of two silver medals and one bronze medal at the 2012 games) and have a go at wheelchair rugby with members of the GB team.

Following an application for funding QAC came top in the 'Education' category of The Yorkshire Bank Community Foundation Awards earlier in the year. The money has enabled the Performing Manufacturing Operations (PMO) team to purchase an embroidery machine and printing system. They have already been busy printing posters, mugs and t-shirts and the team hope that 'QAC Print' will build into a mini enterprise where they can design and produce merchandise for College and external customers.

As part of National Guide Dog Week in October Guide Dogs brought a sensory tunnel and guide dogs into College. Sighted students were able to walk through a pitch black tunnel and experience a taste of life without sight; smelling freshly mown grass, listening to traffic and countryside noises and feeling different surfaces under foot and at their fingertips.

October was Black History Month and students had the opportunity to learn about Martin Luther King and experience a taste of the Caribbean, listening to a steel band and tasting lots of different Caribbean foods.

Following a £10,000 grant from Awards for All, QAC is in the process of purchasing a radio system to enable students to create and produce their own radio shows to be aired across the internet.

PfL Green visit Asda (Oldbury) every Friday to help develop their independent living skills, with each student having the opportunity to select and pay for their shopping. They are supported by the same member of the checkout team every week who, as a result, has been awarded Employee of the Month in store!

Residential students have been busy organising a range of activities in their houses including focus groups, games nights, a Halloween party, shopping trips and bowling competitions.

'Conversation Corner', set up by our Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) team is a club helping students develop communication and conversation skills and become socially equipped for the outside world. To put theory into practice this term students have enjoyed various activities including trips to cafés, the city centre and the Frankfurt Christmas Market.

Children in Need came to QAC in November with students and staff taking part in a range of activities including cake sales, penny trails, sponsored canoe trips and henna/glitter tattoos, raising almost £500 in the process!

Brendan Lynch, a passionate baker and Great British Bake Off finalist in 2012, met up with BTEC Hospitality students at our QA Café to deliver two cooking demonstrations, creating double crusted apple tart and Irish soda bread... Yum!!



## SPOTLIGHT ON



## advance2work

**advance2work (A2W)** is QAC's employment support programme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and aims to support people aged 18 or above with disabilities who want to move into employment.

Our experienced team of Tutors and Employment Consultants work with clients to develop individualised programmes which can last from a few weeks up to a year if necessary.

Until recently A2W were based at our main College site but with student numbers increasing, the team have moved to their own dedicated offsite base in Edgbaston. The move was quite a significant change but the team of 12 staff, along with current clients, have now settled in.

There are still close links with the College campus with departments visiting the A2W site to offer workshops and one-to-one support where needed. Sherv Garcha, Head of DWP Programmes, says "both staff and clients have found the move to be a positive thing. Although we can still access the support offered at College, they have their own self contained premises and they like that".

Being based in a commercial working environment has enabled the programme to develop its own identity and create a more realistic training experience for clients. The move has also created new opportunities for work placements and reinforced A2W's reputation as a training provider in its own right.

Working with around 60 clients over the course of the year the team believe the move will be fantastic in enabling them to work with clients to further develop the skills, confidence and employability of each individual.

**If you think you might be able to support the A2W programme with work placement opportunities please contact the team on 0124 454 8700**



# Sports Hall ★ Update ★

After just over a year of fundraising we are nearing the end of our 'Fit for the Future' Sports Hall campaign. Students, staff, families and supporters of QAC have been getting behind the campaign organising their own events, buying bricks and getting involved in various sponsored challenges from skydives and cycle challenges to the Birmingham Half Marathon.

Thanks to support from a number of trusts and foundations, local organisations and individuals we have now raised over £1,140,000 towards the £1.37m target and are excited to be moving into the planning stages for the building works. We are in the process of awarding the building contract. Internal details from flooring to wall colours have been chosen and soon our dreams of a sports hall will be realised with onsite works due to commence in December 2013. We look forward to the summer newsletter when we will be just weeks away from completion and finally having keys to our very own sports hall!

Although we are almost done we are still fundraising for the project so if you would like to get involved and donate, fundraise or 'buy a brick', please contact the team on **0121 428 5064** or **[fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk)** ●

## Campus Developments

In addition to the sports hall project we are also busy working on other campus developments to enhance provision for our students.

We have been fortunate enough to secure funding to refurbish some of our older onsite buildings, creating new teaching spaces and improving the internal look and feel of the buildings. The funding will allow us to carry out works on the Maintenance building, Oakwood Teaching Centre and the Evolution building with QAC contributing 50% match funding to the project.

What is currently our Maintenance building will soon be transformed into a new, fully accessible teaching centre with 4 modern classrooms, allowing us to increase our provision. Oakwood and Evolution will receive some much needed attention, being brought up to specification, with improved lighting, soundproofing, changing facilities and storage to name but a few of the works that will be taking place across these two areas.

QAC has also been lucky enough to secure the lease to a garden centre in Selly Oak. We are in the process of exploring the many opportunities available for retail and training to support and enhance QAC's work. Several local organisations have expressed support for the project and we look forward to developing a working relationship with many of these as our Umberslade Nurseries project develops.

QAC is currently working with Amey to construct a fantastic new 'travel training area' on our campus. The area will simulate a street and will feature various crossings, kerb heights, surfaces, slopes and obstacles. It will create a safe and controllable environment where the Mobility team will be able to teach vital independence skills for many of our students, especially wheelchair and long cane users. ●

## All Aboard!

**Independence<sup>+</sup>  
PLUS**

Our Independence Plus (IP) service is a 52 week supported living provision. In August, an IP crew of 7 clients and 3 staff took part in the Hammond Innes Centenary Race, sailing from Ipswich to the Isle of Wight.

All ships taking part left Ipswich harbour to cheers and waves from the crowds who came to see the sailors off on their exciting journey. The race started with breathtaking views along the east coast near Clacton on Sea and continued south towards the Kent coast as the crew learnt how to sail the boat correctly.

Unfortunately as the race proceeded the wind dropped leaving our boat, Pegasus and the other ships stuck off the coast near Eastbourne. Listening to the forecast there was no hint of a breeze to come and the crew decided to continue the voyage using engine power.

On the last day, after ships were inspected by actress Celia Imrie, everyone who took part attended a BBQ and presentation evening. Despite some seasickness and rough seas everyone who went had a fantastic time and thoroughly enjoyed life at sea onboard Pegasus. ●

**UMBERSLADE  
NURSERIES**



All Aboard!





# Journo Students

One of the clubs this year is 'Journalism' and some of the students wanted to be involved in writing pieces to be included in this newsletter... so here are a couple of them!

## 7 in Seven Success

by Tom Preston (PfL Red)

During the week of 23rd September QAC supported the 7 in Seven international bike ride with gym based cycle challenges. This was organised to support charity Help Harry Help Others. Both staff and students were encouraged to take part to reach a 700 mile goal in seven days. By Thursday the goal had been reached and was put up to 1000 miles. The final result was 1213 miles cycled and we raised around £140. ●

## New Year

by Shannon Quinn (BTEC Art & Design)

For previous year students, when they took their first step onto the grounds of QAC this term they noticed a few changes, looking at a spot thinking 'I don't remember that'. Over the summer the Bradbury centre had a new room built where the sitting area used to be; all the classrooms on the bottom floor had been changed to PFL rooms, a new conservatory in the Karten centre and even the entrance to the College has been jazzed up!

One of the things people seem keen on is the new room opening in the Bradbury centre. "Looking forward to somewhere to go during directed study" said a BTEC student. This is a place for the students to enjoy their free time to talk and relax. This seems like a positive step forward because a room has been created where the door can be closed and PFL and Art classes won't be disturbed. "This will be a nice addition to College life" said one. ●

## Festive Fun at QAC

This year students and staff have gone all out to get in the festive spirit.

November saw the return of QAC's Christmas Craft Fayre with over 30 local crafters showcasing their skills and wares, filling the hall and dining room with festive cheer. With lots of yummy treats and unique gift ideas the Fayre was a great place to purchase a little something for that someone special for Christmas. Thank you to stall holders and visitors who attended the Fayre, helping to make it the great success that it was, raising the highest yet at nearly £800 all of which goes to QAC.

Celebrations really got into full swing in early December which saw the PFL Christmas Bazaar. PFL students donned their business hats, having made various goodies from Christmas decorations to hyacinth planters to sell at this year's Bazaar. With the help of volunteers from DWP, students spent the day selling their products to staff and students from across the College.

To coincide with these events and really bring Christmas to QAC, we also held Winter Woolly Wednesday with staff and students alike showcasing their Christmas jumpers, winter onesies and an interesting array of festive attire. Competition was high as everyone wanted to be crowned 'Most Festive'.

The chocoholics amongst us also once again enjoyed our Christmas Chocolate Hamper raffles. With the lure of a gorgeous hamper of chocolate goodies to win, raffles took place at QAC, DWP, Hilton, Tyndallwoods and Barclays Wealth with all proceeds coming to QAC.

The Fundraising team also attended a Christmas Fair at the Ernst & Young Offices in Colmore Square. Joining other charities and social enterprises, they took the opportunity to showcase and sell student crafts along with QAC Christmas cards and merchandise. ●

### 7 in Seven Success



### Festive Fun





## Get Involved!



### 'Team QAC' has been busy already this academic year.

In September, not only did we have the 7 in Seven event take place in the Fitness Centre but we also had six people take to the skies for our annual skydive at Hinton Airfield. Adrenalin and excitement were abound as the daredevil jumpers, including a student's parent, staff members and friend of QAC local chef Richard Turner, challenged themselves and their fears. The sun shone and despite nerves the day was a huge success with everyone enjoying it, raising almost £2000 for our Fit for the Future campaign.



In October new recruits joined 'Team QAC' with three runners taking part in the Birmingham Marathon, including chef Steve Love, raising money for us in the process. They joined thousands of other runners, including QAC students and staff who took part in the cross city run.

2014 promises to be an active year with various events planned including London Nightrider (June), our annual Skydive and Spartan Races (September).

If you fancy joining 'Team QAC' to take part in one of these challenges, or for your own personal challenge, then please contact the team on **0121 428 5064** or [fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk) ●

## Centre of Excellence fun day

In our last newsletter we told how QAC and Focus Birmingham had been joined on-site by Guide Dogs and National Blind Children's Society (NBCS), creating a 'Centre of Excellence' in the VI community. On 12th October, the four organisations came together to host a Community Fun Day and Dog Show in our main hall and courtyard.

It was a great opportunity for visitors to learn more about each of the charities and what they do, including the opportunity to have a blindfolded walk with a sighted guide. Officers from Woodgate Valley Community Fire Station attended as did local police officers. There were plenty of fun activities on offer including face painting and a chocolate tombola, with the dog show proving very popular with stiff competition in the 'Best Dog' and 'Best Bitch' categories. ●



## Corporate & Community



### Barclays Turn Decorators

As part of their MADD (Make a Difference Day) initiative a team of employees from Barclays Wealth on Colmore Square spent a day volunteering at QAC, tasked with decorating the Performing Arts area.

Following the initial shock at finding out they would be painting the room black and a trip to local DIY stores for supplies, the team of 8 got to work. The space is used by a range of students to put on various productions and the newly painted walls will add a dramatic atmosphere to performances and shows. The team did an amazing job and the Performing Arts group were thrilled when they came back after half term to see the results.

### Team Building Day

We are looking to introduce external Team Building Days to the schedule for next year in the form of flexible, educational and fun team challenge days.

We trialled our first session in November with help from volunteers from Tyndallwoods, Baker Tilly and Connex Education. Volunteers tried their hand at a range of tasks designed to test their communication, team work and problem solving skills whilst giving them insight into the life of people with disabilities. With exercises including sighted guide challenges, Braille and sign language tasks, everyone walked away having not only had a great day but having learnt new skills.

Following two more taster sessions early next year we will look to market these events out to local companies, offering a new and innovative alternative to the traditional 'Team Building Day'. All proceeds from these events will go to QAC, helping to raise valuable funds for the College. If you are interested in taking part in one of these events please get in touch with the Fundraising Team on **0121 428 5064** or [fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk) ●

sight village

QAC Sight Village events are the UK's leading exhibitions of technology, equipment and support services for people with vision impairment and for people experiencing age related sight problems.

### 2014 Dates

**Edinburgh**

23rd April

**Glasgow**

24th April

**Birmingham**

15th & 16th July

**New for 2014 Leeds**  
(September: date TBC)

**London**

4th November

Events are free to attend and we hope to see you there.

We owe a particular message of appreciation to our volunteer sighted guides from Lordswood Girls' School, Soroptimist International, RR Donnelley & Barclays Bank for supporting visitors at Sight Village events across the country.

autism central

Autism Central returns on  
**14th October**

again hosted by QAC at the  
Clarendon Suites, Birmingham.

The event will showcase 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.

For more information on Sight Village events and Autism Central, please contact [keasthope@qac.ac.uk](mailto:keasthope@qac.ac.uk) or 0121 428 5041



feelgood

Health & Fitness

Serving QAC students and the local community, the QAC Fitness Centre is a top class gym designed to meet the needs of a diverse user base 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**



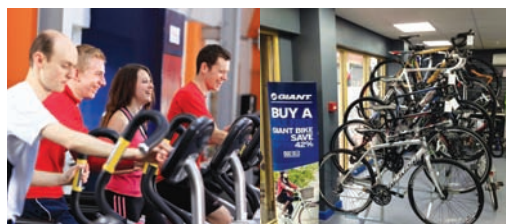
Based in Bearwood, iCycle offers a wide range of bicycles, spares, accessories and clothing for all aspects of cycling. The fully trained team also provide expert maintenance and repair services keeping your bike in first-rate condition.

Contact us on **0121 428 5040**



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**



QAC Enterprises consists of a range of businesses that raise money for Queen Alexandra College. All profits are paid back into the charity and help to enhance the College experience for our students.



*(Transcriptions and Braille & Tactile Signs)*

All Formats Transcriptions provide a specialist service transcribing documents into alternative formats (Braille, Large Print, Audio) for people with a vision impairment.

For more information contact us on **0121 428 5018**

All Formats Signs manufactures internal and external building signs, both in text and Braille and can help assess whether or not your provision is DDA suitable.

For more information contact us on **0121 428 5019**

### Conference & Training Facilities available for hire

We have excellent conference and training facilities available to hire.

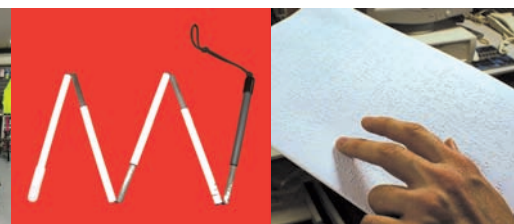
Contact us on **0121 428 5041**



COFFEE JUNCTION

Coffee Junction, our family friendly café offers a range of quality teas, coffees and food. Young people with disabilities also get the chance to gain valuable industry skills with the fully equipped training kitchen based above the café in Bearwood.

Contact us on **0121 420 1990**



● QAC News will be issued twice a year, in July and December. In between issues you can keep up to speed on what's happening on our website [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk) or by following us on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

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