



# NEWSLETTER SPRING / SUMMER 2016



Umberslade Nurseries is part of QAC Enterprises Ltd owned by Queen Alexandra College - a national college and charity for people with disabilities. Students visit Umberslade and play a vital role in maintaining, planting and harvesting our produce, whilst also learning about horticulture, experiencing the outdoor environment and having fun!

We are open to the general public, with 'The Potting Shed' tea room serving delicious cakes, and our retail outlet where you can buy lots of things gardening based along with cards, gifts and trinkets.

## Meet The Umberslade Team

*Nicky* is the Manager, organising the planting programme for students to grow flowers and vegetables for sale in our retail outlet, managing staff and volunteers and liaising with local community groups. Nicky has previous experience working with 'at risk' adults on community allotments and designing gardens that the groups installed for charities, church groups and children's centres in the community.

*Terry* is our Maintenance Technician, carrying out all site maintenance, organising tools and equipment for student classes; *Wendy* works in our retail outlet and tea room dealing with the public. Both Terry and Wendy are previous clients from our "Advance 2 Work" employment programme. *Janet* is our weekend volunteer working in 'The Potting Shed', serving tea and cake, she is a committed and valued member of our team.



## Crop Harvesting

As part of their visits to Umberslade, many of our students get involved with planting seeds and plants, and look forward to seeing them grow into the picture on the packet – particularly when it comes to the vegetables! This is because they then have a fun time harvesting the crops and taking them to the shop, or better still taking them back to college to sell to staff or use in their cooking sessions. It's a great opportunity for students to practice their communication skills, taking it in turns to serve the customers and package the produce up – without squashing the tomatoes! During the summer, the harvesting task falls to local groups who use the site, along with groups of volunteers. QAC staff who work through the holiday also get the chance to spend a couple of hours away from their desks helping maintain the vegetable beds, whilst also taking some delicious fresh vegies home with them!

## Halloween Fun Day, October 2015

Ghosts, ghouls and plenty of pumpkins were around as we hosted our Halloween Fun Day. Visitors were treated to an interactive puppet show, face painting, trick or treat tombola and plenty of creepy crafts. Spooky scavenger hunts also took place across the site with everyone having lots of fun before heading home.



## Festive Frolics, December 2015

Santa took up residence in one of our sheds in December, welcoming guests with a 'Ho-Ho-Ho' and a mince pie. It was part of our festive season events, with a special menu in 'The Potting Shed', a range of festive gifts and decorations for sale and of course Christmas trees! It was our first real Christmas in business and it was great to see people come out and support us. Unfortunately our festive spirit was slightly dampened when we were saddened to report that we had been broken into and had our stock of trees stolen – a project some of our IP students were working really hard on. Although heart-breaking, it was really nice to see the local community support us, from press reports to financial donations. A special mention to Codsall & Wergs Garden Centre who kindly replaced the Christmas trees free of charge. We really appreciate the support of everyone who rallied around us, so thank you!



## Morrisons Foundation donation- 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Following a successful fundraising application, we were awarded £11,500 from The Morrisons Foundation to support Umberslade's development. It was 'all smiles' as the cheque was awarded at our local Morrisons store in Edgbaston, with Sarah Caldwell (Fundraising & Grants Manager), Nicky (Umberslade Manager) and students and staff from PFL Red meeting Store Manager Mike and Community Champion Nicky who presented the cheque to us. The money has enabled us to create a sensory garden area, complete with traditional yurt and storytelling circle, surrounded by a range of plants and shrubs to appeal to different senses. It will be a great addition to what we already offer, giving visitors a place to go and relax and enjoy the environment around them.



## Community Projects

Umberslade is a great space in a great location and lends itself really well to hosting a range of activities for different audiences. Over the next few months we will be launching a number of new projects and workshops, made possible through fundraising applications, to suit people of all ages. In May we will be hosting weekly workshops aimed at people with dementia and/or their carers. Sessions will include refreshments and will involve planting hanging baskets and pots etc., with participants taking their creations home with them. We are planning to monitor and evidence outcomes to hopefully secure more funding in the future, given the current government push to make communities more 'dementia friendly'. Following these workshops we will be running 'Cake & Craft' sessions aimed at over 50's who live alone. This will encourage people to get out, learn new things and socialise with others, with a similar theme to the dementia sessions, for those more able we will encourage people to "have a go outdoors", planting, harvesting or just pottering in the greenhouse. For our younger visitors we are able to run Forest School sessions, where they can learn about the great outdoors and a range of survival skills. We're also hoping to run various workshops over the summer holidays – more info soon!

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Our Summer Fayre!, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2016

We are really excited to be hosting our first (hopefully of many!) Summer Fayre this year. There will be a range of stalls and crafts, live music, puppets, face painting, BBQ and much more! Please get in touch if you are interested in having a stall, volunteering, play in a band or are a member of a choir; all money raised will go towards supporting QAC and our students.

## Volunteering

Our site is quite big, almost 2 acres in size, and as such requires a lot of looking after and maintenance. Although we have a small staff team, and student groups also help with a variety of tasks such as leaf sweeping, weeding and harvesting, it is great when we get groups of willing volunteers who come and help us. Since being up and running we have been lucky enough to welcome groups from Zurich, DWP, N Power, Barclays and Co-Operative who have helped with planting, painting and general maintenance, helping keep Umberslade in tip-top condition. Not only have they helped with a range of manual labour tasks, they also got to spend a few hours away from their desks, meet our students and have lots of fun at the same time! DWP are also regular volunteers at some of our community days, particularly Halloween and Easter, helping entertain visitors, getting messy and crafty in the process! Every Sunday we have a group from Community Payback on site, carrying out many tasks to help maintain and improve the site including installing pathways, building raised beds and creating dead hedging. We would not look as good as we do now without donations to help us purchase the materials needed and the 'muscle' provided by Community Payback teams at zero cost to us. We also welcome volunteers that have experience in retail, hospitality and horticulture at any level, enthusiasm for the work we do and our ethos is the most important thing we look for in any volunteering individual. If you're interested in volunteering with us, get in touch!



## Thank You!

The development of Umberslade has been a long but worthwhile process, and we really wouldn't have been able to do it without the support we have received from individual supporters, volunteers groups, and companies. Not to mention the hard work our students and staff have put into it!

With this in mind, and as this is our first newsletter it felt only right that we say a huge thank you to everyone who has donated and/or been involved in our journey.

### Funders (providing financial support)

Edgar E Lawley Foundation \* Finnis Scott Charitable Trust \* Grimmitt Trust \* Morrisons Foundation \* N Smith Charitable Settlement \* Roger Vere Foundation \* Rowlands Trust \* Stanley Smith Horticulture Trust \* Zurich Community Trust

### Companies (providing volunteers and/or in-kind donations)

Barclays Wealth \* Community Payback \* DWP \* Laura Ashley \* Midland Co-Operative \* N Power \* Price's Candles \* Probation Service \* Wallpaper Direct \* Zurich (Birmingham)

## Get Involved!

If you would like to know more about how you can get involved at Umberslade and the activities on offer then please get in touch – 0121 472 4894 or [nstitt@qac.ac.uk](mailto:nstitt@qac.ac.uk).

You can also follow us on Facebook (Umberslade Nurseries) and Twitter (@Umberslade\_QAC).

