



WINTER 2016

## Important Visitors!

Since returning in September, we've had many visitors through our doors, wanting to find out more about us and the work we do, which is great. There are a couple in particular we would like to take this opportunity to mention and thank.

As a charity we have wanted to appoint a new Patron for some time and following a few meetings and his appearance at our Summer Games opening ceremony in June, we are really excited to appoint Mikail Huggins into the role. We've been working with Mikail for a couple of years now and governors were really impressed by his ability to engage and inspire our students. He has already visited our Sport students in his new role, using his experience in athletics – he is former guide runner for Paralympic sprinter Libby Clegg, winning Commonwealth Gold and Silver at London 2012 – and his role as Mentor with The Dame Kelly Holmes Trust to engage the whole group, even those who showed little interest in the session. We look forward to more visits from Mikail where he can work with more students.



We were extremely pleased to welcome the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Cllr Carl Rice for a visit recently. Whilst here he met and spoke with students and staff and enjoyed a tour of the site and showcase of what we offer, including an inclusive sport session, a mini performance from PFL Gold and White, café treats courtesy of PFL Orange and a sighted guide demonstration with a member of our Mobility Team. He thoroughly enjoyed his visit and was keen to share his experience on social media, helping spread the word about QAC. Following his sighted guide experience we look forward to working with his office to organise a similar session for local councillors.

## A Word from Hugh



**Hugh J Williams**  
Principal

QAC's developments could not take place without its supporters. Our aim is always to ensure our service best meets student needs and aspirations for the future. September saw the start of innovative new programmes: Access to College (supported by Birmingham City Council) and Powerchair Football (in association with the West Bromwich Albion Foundation). Respite is a service of interest to many families and it has been steadily growing over the last few years.

QAC's Enterprises provide income as well as great work experience for students and services to the local community. Sight Village (which has operated in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds and London) is essential to providing access to specialist accessible equipment and technology for people with a vision impairment.

The hard work of QAC staff was acknowledged by the positive inspection results from the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted in the summer.

I hope readers will enjoy learning about all the activities outlined in this newsletter. Thank you for your contribution to QAC's success - your support has made a big difference to the opportunities available to young people and adults with disabilities.

**Hugh.**

## Pudsey Power!

We always support Children in Need and this year was no exception, we even had a bit of extra help!

The annual 'penny trail' took place in the Bradbury Centre with students and staff laying out the loose change that had been collected. As a special surprise, they even

had some helping paws as Pudsey himself paid a visit! Impressed by what he saw, he sat with students and helped them sort coins before posing for photos, having some cane training and thanking everyone for their support.

Other students ran fundraising efforts too; Hospitality students held a cake sale, IT students made 'act of kindness' bookmarks and two Health & Social Care students did a sponsored silence.

Money was still being counted as we went to print, nudging the £350 mark! A big well done and thank you to everyone who took part and supported our CiN fundraising – Pudsey was very impressed!



## Highlights



### SEPTEMBER

This year the Birmingham Inclusive Sports Festival took place to coincide with the Paralympic Games over in Rio. Once again the launch was hosted at QAC and saw sports providers from across the city showcasing the range of inclusive sports available. We also welcomed visitors including GB Wheelchair Basketball player Mark Fosbrook and GB Paralympic skier Anna Turney, who was this year's BISF Ambassador.

BFGs, Willy Wonkas and Matildas were walking the corridors as we celebrated Roald Dahl's 100th birthday. The LRC hosted a live streaming session which included a performance from the Royal Shakespeare Company's 'Matilda The Musical', a 'draw-along' session with Sir Quentin Blake, and a message from the cast of The BFG. We also ran a competition for students to create wondercrump words with PFL Amber using student initials to come up with 'Jabsjamwac' and PFL Orange creating 'Inky Doodle'.

Cakes and treats were aplenty as our Hospitality groups and some of our IP clients hosted coffee & cake mornings to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Care.

Following a successful project last year, we welcomed back trampolining coach extraordinaire Deb Danks from Active8 Trampoline Club. She has obtained funding to enable her to deliver weekly trampolining sessions, enabling more students to get involved.

### OCTOBER

An exciting new event for us this year was World Space Week. Lots of activities took place, with students and staff learning more about Tim Peake's Space Mission and student groups creating some fantastic displays to show their interest in space. PFL Black did an

amazing job winning the group competition and are looking forward to enjoying their prize – a trip to the National Space Centre in Leicester! Unfortunately a visit from Thinktank's Openreach Team had to be postponed, but we will be welcoming them and their mobile planetarium after Christmas.

For Black History Month, we had a particular focus on the Caribbean Islands and invited the Sofia's Steel Drums Group into college. They worked with students, teaching about the Caribbean Islands and the origin of the Steel drums and street music in Trinidad. Lots of students attended the workshops, with many having a go and learning to play 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight'. As well as music, some students also got to try different Caribbean foods such as plantains, yams, and dumplings as part of their experience.

We welcomed Jo Huck, Operations Manager for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, into College to present a cheque to be used towards buying a wheelchair accessible tent for next year's expedition. Whilst here, Jo also presented former college student and current volunteer, Zach with his DoFE Bronze award certificate, which he completed last year.

### NOVEMBER

'Looking My Best' club welcomed students from University College Birmingham (UCB) Hair and Beauty courses over a three week period. They joined us as part of their Employability sessions and treated students (and staff!) to mini makeovers and a range of treatments, whilst also giving those in the club a few hints and tips.

In our last newsletter we told how we hosted a garden party for the Queen's 90th birthday. As part of the celebrations, students designed

birthday cards which were sent to the Queen. Winners, Jessica and Neelam were delighted and surprised to receive a Royal "Thank You" for their efforts, direct from the Queen's Lady-in-Waiting at Buckingham Palace, complete with individual cards.

We welcomed five Sport students from UCB to join us as part of their Employability Week placement. They worked across all areas of our sport provision, including the Powerchair Football Academy, Fitness Centre and PFL Fitness, gaining a real insight into inclusive sport and the difference it can make to those involved.

Kindness shone as we took part in Birmingham's Week of Kindness. IT students sold 'kindness bookmarks' they had designed (raising money for Children in Need) and individual students were seen supporting others with their work and activities. People's acts of kindness were then displayed in the LRC, encouraging others to do the same.

### DECEMBER

Festive spirits were high as Christmas crafts, café specials, Winter Woolly Day and student performances took place across College!



# Spotlight

## Umberslade's at the heart of the community

Back in July we were really excited to host our very first Summer Fayre which was a lot of hard work, but worth every moment. It was a great event, raising awareness and valuable funds for Umberslade, with lots of local residents coming through the gates to find out more about us, unaware of what we have to offer the community.

Since then things have continued to be really busy with lots of community based activities taking place. Our 'Growing Minds' workshops for people over 55 and

those with dementia have continued to be popular, with new people coming along and joining in. We've had great feedback from participants and support workers involved with both groups, so it's something we hope to develop further over the next few months.

October half term saw activities appeal to a younger audience with our Forest Schools taster sessions and Halloween Fun Day bringing people in, and marking the first use of our recently installed earth oven. Both events were really popular with local children and their families and we hope to be offering similar events and workshops more regularly next year.

We recently launched our Friends of Umberslade scheme, where people can, for a small donation, be involved in our work more directly and feel part of the Umberslade community we're building.

Of course, student activities remain central to Umberslade's mission, giving them a range of opportunities and skill sets, and we run different activities to reinforce this. In September we welcomed our friends from Gro-Organic back to work with students over two

weeks, to design and build a nature village as part of a wider Nature Watch project which we secured funding for. Lots of fun was had by everyone involved, and lots of creative ideas came out of it – including a mini elephant house and fairy garden!

As this newsletter went to print, we were gearing up for our seasonal offerings, including Santa visits in the yurt, festive treats in 'The Potting Shed' and our Christmas Craft Fayre, all promising to be lots of fun. Next year promises to bring lots more 'dates for the diary' so keep looking on our social media or contact us for more information at [nstitt@qac.ac.uk](mailto:nstitt@qac.ac.uk)

## Student Council Elected

In September students were asked to consider joining the Student Council and to nominate themselves for election if they were interested. Following a student vote in October, this year's student council is now up and running.

We had over 40 candidates up for election from across different areas of the college, which is fantastic, and as a result we have expanded the council to 10 members this year.

The role of the Student Council and its members is to provide a voice for all students to put their ideas and thoughts forward, whether this is regarding events and activities or changes they would like to see in college. We are hoping that the Student Council develops even further this year so that it is fully integrated into college life in order to make it an even better place to be for our students.

## New Set of Wheels

The transport we provide plays an important role at QAC, not just in terms of getting students to and from College, but also in enabling them to make the most of opportunities and take part in trips and activities outside college. With more students and more needs to accommodate, it is important we have the right transport available.

Following a fundraising application, we were really pleased that Lord's Taverners also saw the importance transport plays in QAC life and kindly contributed half the costs of a new wheelchair friendly minibus to be added to our fleet. To mark their continued support, we welcomed representatives from Lord's Taverners, along with Lady Taverners, Essex Auto Group and BRB Principal Ballerina Jenna Roberts to QAC in November to officially present the vehicle to us. They enjoyed a tour of campus and got to find out more about what we do before meeting PFL Green, one of the groups who will be using the minibus on a regular basis.

The remaining cost of the minibus was covered by a legacy donation that was made to QAC earlier in the year, showing the difference such a thoughtful gesture can make to charities such as us.

Student Council



New Minibus



Umberslade Christmas Craft Fayre



Umberslade Dementia Groups

Lord's Taverners Visit



# Spotlight

## PFA Programme Begins

September saw the start of our new Powerchair Football Academy programme, in conjunction with The Albion Foundation. Every Thursday and Friday, the group visits West Bromwich Leisure Centre to undertake the practical side of their programme. This unique course develops students' Powerchair Football skills and sports leadership/coaching skills. Each week, they spend up to 12 hours training, which is the amount of time recommended to

become an elite Powerchair footballer. Sessions include warm-ups, football drills and actual matches, and in January, students will begin sports coaching courses. For the rest of the week students are based in college completing various sports vocational programmes at Level 1 to 3. The intention of this programme is to not only enable the students to develop as Powerchair footballers, but to open doors at regional, national and international levels.

## LEAP Cafes

LEAP (Learning, Employability and Progression) Cafés have become a regular occurrence at QAC now, with our onsite café facility being used to host many a café service. Groups have an allocated day where they take over the café and offer a range of yummy treats for people to enjoy, with some providing a takeaway and delivery service making it even more tempting!

Students take it in turns at various roles including front of house, serving staff and on the till, enabling them to develop and practice a number of customer service and functional skills. Special themed cafes are also organised to encourage people to buy goodies such as cakes, biscuits, paninis and samosas!



LEAP Cafe



Work Experience Week

## Work Experience Week

As part of our commitment to offering students quality work experience placements we have worked hard to develop a range of links and relationships to make this possible. Recently our efforts were acknowledged as we were awarded the Fair Train Work Experience Quality Standard - Bronze Level.

The hard work of our Employment Pathways Team shone during this year's Work Experience Week in October as they organised a variety of work based activities for students to take part in, involving a total of 14 employers and approximately 120 students from across the college.

Activities included our IT groups working on project management activities with National Grid, a behind the scenes tour and workshop with The Barber Institute, a customer service and Halloween workshop with Hobbycraft and animal care at Holbeache Farm. Other employers included Interserve, Willmott Dixon, Citizen Coaching, Aston University Autism Central, and Onneley House.

QAC Students from PFL, Vocational and Independence Plus along with students from St Paul's Trust School in Balsall Heath worked in collaboration to enhance their experience and complete work based tasks together with employees. A range of practical hands on skills were developed alongside communication and confidence, strengthening our students' personal development.

The week was a great success with lots of positive feedback from both employers and students and is something we look forward to running again. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the employers we worked with for help making it such a success!

Work Experience Week



Powerchair Football Academy

## Independence Plus News

IP clients had an eventful summer with some of them being involved in the "Seek/Find" live performance at the MAC in Cannon Hill Park, as part of the Spectra project. The clients were fantastic and really enjoyed getting involved and showing off their performance talent.

Thanks to Sportivate funding, some clients were lucky enough to be part of an exciting canoeing project where they got to learn to paddle in Red Indian style canoes. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the experience and learned new skills, and thankfully no cries of 'man overboard' were heard!

Thanks to the support of a local Rotary Club, clients were able to enjoy a trip aboard the 'Pamela May' along the Droitwich canal in the summer. As they sailed down to Hanbury Marina, clients had a chance to steer the narrow boat along the canal and take in the sights.

IP clients know how to enjoy a party and this Autumn has been no different. Firstly, they hosted an American night, soon followed by a Halloween party complete with scary costumes!

Woodgate Valley's Blue Watch visited clients to do a home safety talk in November, but unfortunately were called out to an incident before they got to finish! Clients were pleased to welcome them back at the start of December, and look forward to seeing the crew again soon.

Independence Plus





# Events

## Fundraising

In August we attended Woodgate Valley Fire Station's Open Day, taking Nicky from Umberslade and Jody and Emma from the Mobility Team. The event was really busy with lots of families coming along, many trying our 'sim specs' to find out more about different vision impairments and what it's like to be guided.

Our annual skydive took place in September and this year was extra special as it was our largest group of jumpers yet, with 14 people jumping including a student, staff member, corporate team and youngest QAC skydiver yet! Nerves,

excitement and adrenalin were in abundance amongst the group as they waited and watched each other take the leap as the sun shone. everyone enjoyed the experience – some more than others – and thanks to their bravery raised over £3000 which is a fantastic amount.

Dinner in the Dark returned to the Macdonald Burlington Hotel in November, this year's event was slightly different as it was also raising money for Muir Maxwell Trust, a paediatric epilepsy trust. Over sixty diners took part, being plunged into darkness and unfamiliar surroundings as they experienced what it is like to live with a vision impairment. Diners also had a few surprises during the evening including a Play-doh creation challenge! Everyone enjoyed the experience, One diner commenting 'it really made me realise what I take for granted... eating food with no sight isn't easy, never mind coping permanently'.

Festive spirits arrived a little early this year, with our Christmas Craft and Gift Fayre taking place at the end of November, with nearly 40 stalls setting up in the hall and dining room. Stallholders were treated to a performance from Brandhall Community Choir as they perused the array of gifts on offer. A couple of weeks later saw Umberslade kick off the festive season with its own Craft Fayre, with the large polytunnel hosting over 30 stalls. Santa took up residence in the yurt, the Potting Shed served mince pies and other festive treats and local singers Dynamix led a festive singsong.

Looking ahead to next year we will be launching our '20 for 20' campaign, asking people to donate £20 towards making 20 student focused projects happen. This is one of the many things we'll be organising to celebrate our 20th anniversary as an independent charity. We'll be pulling Team QAC into the mix too, and we really want people to sign up to the annual skydive and Birmingham International Marathon to support us.

Dinner in the Dark



Christmas Craft Fayre



## Corporate & Community

Once again, Zurich employees have given amazing support taking part in team volunteering challenges at Umberslade and doing fundraising for us – a group of employees even put themselves to the challenge and took part in the skydive! In November we welcomed members of the Disability Inclusion Group to and Birmingham office to QAC to take part in a 'Seeing is Believing' disability awareness day and find out more about the College, which was great fun and gave them ideas they could take back to their offices to raise awareness around disability. We hope to run similar sessions in the Birmingham office in the new year.

Similarly, DWP have been great on the volunteering front, with teams getting involved with maintenance and upkeep activities over at Umberslade as well as setting up for the Christmas Craft Fayre over there, and supporting PFL students at their Christmas event.

Earlier in the year, The Gentleman's Night Out organisation donated to our Judo club, ensuring it would continue this academic year. We were pleased to welcome members back out to college to see this year's Judo students. They were so impressed, they want to continue to be involved and have pledged to help us next year too, which we're really pleased about, and we look forward to attending their presentation event in May.

A number of companies have supported us with in-kind product donations this year, from jars and craft making supplies, to tractor tyres and decorations. A big thank you to everyone who has supported us!

**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](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk)**

DWP Festive Volunteers



Skydive



Zurich Summer Painting



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

**They raise invaluable funds for the College and promote good practice in disability employment. Many of the enterprises 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](mailto: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**



**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**



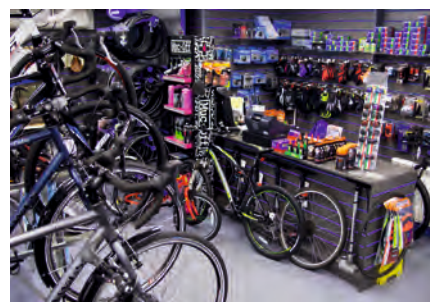
**Based in Bearwood, we offer a wide range of bicycles, spares, accessories and clothing for all aspects of cycling. The fully trained team also provide expert maintenance and repair services keeping your bike in first-rate condition.**

**Contact us on 0121 428 5040**

## **CHILDREN'S PARTIES**

**The beautiful traditional yurt and sensory garden at Umberslade, in Selly Oak, is the perfect place to hire for children's parties. Or hire our wonderful sports hall - available evenings, weekends and out of term time.**

**Contact Nicky on 0121 472 4894 (Yurt) or Dave on 0121 472 5010 (Sports Hall)**



**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  
25th April**

**Glasgow  
26th April**

**Birmingham  
18/19th July**

**Manchester  
27th September**

**London  
7th/8th 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  
17th October**

**Queen Alexandra College, Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9TG  
Tel: 0121 428 5050 E-mail: [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto: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](http://www.qac.ac.uk) or follow us on Twitter & Facebook.**



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