



SUMMER 2020

## Eco Group Action

Our Eco Group has been busy again, organising a 'Dress as an Animal Day' in February to raise money to enable QAC to adopt a vulnerable species of animal and also donate to providing emergency care for the koalas and native animals injured during the Australian bush fires. The day went well, with students and staff dressing up in a variety of animal inspired outfits, from parrots and zebras to lions and elephants, turning QAC into a bit of a jungle! Some groups also sold animal themed goodies and yummy treats to help raise even more money towards the project. It was a great effort and Eco Group managed to raise enough money to adopt a jaguar for a year and donate to the Australian emergency care fund.

For another project, the group invited our Maintenance Team to one of their meetings to discuss the environmentally friendly policies in place at college; they were very surprised – and pleased – at what is already happening, but also had some more good ideas for the team to consider moving forward.

Although due to Covid-19 students were not at College for global Earth Hour on March 28,



Eco Group had already been promoting the day. People were encouraged to think about their energy use and join others across the globe in switching off lights and appliances for an hour to save energy and enjoy the night's star filled sky.

The group was also really excited to be presented with 'Eco-Warrior' badges, which they wore with pride to show they were part of the group and working to promote environmental awareness across College.

## A Word from Bev



This must be the strangest year we have ever known in education. However, the QAC spirit was strong and we focused on the 'new normal' for our students, clients and staff. 'Remote' education, welfare and therapy support was put in place and staff ensured communications were maintained between students, their staff, parents and carers, the multiple Local Authorities and the ESFA. The words 'logistically complicated' underestimate the sheer gravity of what staff at QAC have undertaken.

Some Independence Plus provision was maintained and the majority of the AllFormats team returned to work in April, and I highly commend their dedication and positive attitude. Likewise, to the H&S and Duty Management team for making this safe and workable for those involved.

Student facing staff maintained their front line working across all areas albeit via email, telephone or online forums and Business Support areas worked effectively from home ensuring operations were uninterrupted.

Lockdown has inspired some new opportunities and we look forward to resuming our temporarily halted Residential and Community Service plans.

A huge thank you goes out to all QAC staff and external stakeholders for working so well and supportively together in these strange times. The planning, dedication and amazing resilience shown is inspiring, thank you.

Please continue to stay safe and well.

**Bev Jessop**  
Principal & Chief Executive

## Showstopping Showcase!

In March, as an alternative to the College's Annual General Meeting, we hosted a Student Showcase, aiming to celebrate the richness and diversity of our students' talents, of which there are many.

The showcase saw students from Performing Arts, Music Club and other areas take to the stage for a number of dance and music performances, with the show being open to staff, parents/carers and other QAC stakeholders to attend.

The event was introduced by QAC's Chair of Governors Ian Richards and closed by Principal and Chief Executive Bev Jessop, who provided guests with an update on the

College's current status and the progress of the 5-year plan.

It was a great event, with students putting on some amazing performances which guests thoroughly enjoyed.

Well done to everyone involved!





## Highlights

Braille Day Activities



PFL Green Creative Planting



RBS High Tea



Creative Clay Creations



London Adventures



B&Q Shopping Spree



Valentine Treats

### JANUARY

Thornton House residents enjoyed a trip to the Birmingham Hippodrome to enjoy this year's panto, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, having lots of fun and singing their hearts out with the rest of the audience.

Our annual College Braille Day took place, raising awareness of the importance of Braille as a means of communication for blind and partially sighted people. It was an opportunity for everyone to learn about Braille, take part in a range of Braille related activities and gain more understanding of how some of our visually impaired students and staff read and learn.

As part of one of their units, Hospitality students visited Resorts World Birmingham to meet Hannah and Philippa who gave them an 'all access' tour of the different areas including shops, spa and eateries before talking about the different roles within the complex and how they all work together. They watched a presentation about Resorts World followed by some movie trailers in the cinema, and had a chance to enjoy some time in Vortex (the complex's Family Gaming Centre) before being given a gift card for future visits. It was an inspiring day and students came back with lots to think about in terms of the world of Hospitality.

Thanks to our friends at CBSO, a group of students were able to attend a relaxed performance of The Wizard of Oz, featuring a 10-piece CBSO ensemble and script specially designed for students with special educational needs. Students joined characters on a magical, musical journey through imaginary worlds, with opportunities to engage with the performance throughout.



Resorts World Fun

### FEBRUARY

PFL students were busy creating wonderful gifts and treats for Valentine's Day and groups took over the Bradbury atrium, spreading the love with stalls selling decorative jars, flavoured popcorn, bath goodies and more!

In line with #TimeToChange Mental Health Awareness Day, we welcomed Wayne from Innermind Balance who delivered some creative clay workshops. Students created clay sculptures to reflect their emotions and learned that there is no stigma to mental health, and that talking to others can help. Sessions were really interactive and a great way for students to be creative and take part in some positive group discussions.

PFL Green students got a bit muddy at Umberslade giving some donated wellies a new lease of life by. They were too small to wear so they decided to transform them into pretty seasonal planters. They worked really well as a team and used lots of skills and had great fun doing it, bringing some of them back to college to decorate campus, leaving the rest at Umberslade to sell.

Thornton House residents, travelled to Coventry to watch them beat Portsmouth 1-0 in the football, much to the delight of their very own Coventry City supporter, with the half-time hot chocolate being everyone's highlight.

### MARCH

Spring was in the air as Hospitality students hosted a special 'high tea' for some of our friends from RBS, who were welcomed with smiles before enjoying some delicious sandwiches and cakes. These mornings are lots of fun and a great way for students to practice their hospitality skills in different roles, including front of house, server and food preparation.

Student Council Reps Connor and Adam joined Deputy Principal Jan and Curriculum Area Manager Andy on a trip to London to represent QAC at the annual "Celebrating Midlands Colleges" Parliamentary reception, organised by the Association Of Colleges. They all had a great time listening to various speakers and guests, such as the Secretary of State for Education, as well as enjoying some of the City's sights.

PFL Indigo got the gardening bug as part of their Dragons Den project, which was to transform a small area of garden next to their classroom into mini allotments. As part of their 'Work Opportunities' unit they wrote their shopping lists and took their award money to the local B&Q to buy some plants and tools that they needed. It was a great experience for the students who got to practice their money skills and fill their trolleys as well as happily chat with staff about who they were and what they were doing.



# Spotlight

## Community Services Developments

As part of our 5-year strategy (running 2019-2024) QAC is developing a new range of services for people in the community. These will include support services to enable people to access community activities (including a PA / support worker service), social and / or focus groups, leisure activities and the development of QAC as a hub for inclusive sport and fitness. We will also be running holiday clubs for QAC students who want to access activities when College is closed. In

the longer term we have plans for a range of specialist services including day opportunities for young people with very complex needs and a community arts programme.

All of these services will operate within the QAC ethos of developing learning and independence and will be open to young people who have previously been QAC students and also people who are contacting us for the first time. Through person-centred leisure, work experience, recreational and cultural activities, we aim to support people to not just achieve greater independence but also to create friendship groups and support networks, find new opportunities and to participate as active members of the community.

This is a really exciting development for us, and if anyone is interested in finding out more about this service please contact Jane Morel, Director of Community Services at [jmorel@qac.ac.uk](mailto:jmorel@qac.ac.uk)



Fun Times, Oakwood Style



## Oakwood Living

Students and staff in Oakwood, one of our residential houses, like to be kept busy and love coming up with different ideas for things they can do together. Their 'activity nights' are always great fun and involve students and staff working together to organise a range of different activities, with bingo being one of the favourites! Arts and crafts are another popular pastime, and in March students put their creativity to the test to design and make some lovely cards for the mother figures in their lives.

Promoting healthy lifestyles and fitness is something they all work at and the outdoor gym is one of the popular exercise options amongst the group. Whatever the exercise, students love getting out in the fresh air and taking part and enjoying some fun and friendly competition.

All of the activities organised are great ways for residential students to engage in communal activities, encouraging them to interact and form positive friendships. They also offer opportunities to try something new and develop skills outside the classroom, which is great fun for everyone.

## Dragons' Den

At the start of the year, we hosted our Winter Dragons Den competition with groups putting forward some great project ideas for funding. Although some of these projects have not been able to happen due to Covid-19, a lot of them have at least been started.

Our Rehab And Travel Training (RATT) Team purchased a range of VI friendly kitchen equipment such as one cup hot water dispensers and liquid level indicators, which students will use in sessions. The team have also delivered staff training on how these aids can make life easier in the kitchen for people with vision impairments. A variety of movement and self-regulating sensory equipment was bought to create sensory circuits to support students, particularly those in Springboard groups. Staff have also been able to start working with them to identify their sensory needs through a series of flash cards and activities.

We look forward to seeing these projects, and some of the other projects, move forward when College returns after the Summer.

## Chinese New Year Celebrations

In February, students were excited to take part in a range of fun activities to celebrate Chinese New Year in style.

Chinese Dance workshops saw everyone learning the movements to the traditional Chinese dragon dance, ribbon dance and the fan dance before trying to recreate them for each other - it was a very colourful, energetic and fun filled morning for everyone.

As part of the celebrations, students also explored aspects of Chinese culture such as traditional dress and why people wear red. They then went on to learn about how Chinese New Year is a special time for families to be together; how 2020 is the year of the Rat in Chinese horoscopes and what this means, before looking at what their own Chinese horoscopes were - Monkey, Rooster or otherwise.



Chinese New Year Celebrations

# Spotlight

## A Trip To The Blues

A group of football loving students were thrilled to be invited to St. Andrew's Trillion Trophy Stadium in March. Although everyone in the group was a big Birmingham City FC fan, for some of them this was their first ever visit to a football stadium, so it was even more special.

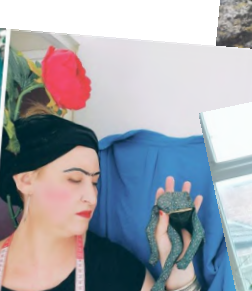
The trip was organised as part of Level Playing Field's 'Weeks of Action' initiative, which aims to celebrate the positive initiatives undertaken by clubs, sporting venues, and their governing bodies in partnership with disabled sports fans and disabled supporters' associations. Sporting venues up and down the country get involved in this annual event, so it was exciting for QAC to be part of the action this year.

The group were treated to a tour of the ground, including a look around the dressing room and dugouts before posing for some photos and listening to stories of games gone by from diehard Blues fan Lewis Mitchell, who was named Supporter of the Season in 2016/17.

It was a great day for everyone, sharing in their love of football and experiences as fans, topped off with the students being given complimentary tickets for a future game. A big thank you to everyone at St. Andrews for making the visit possible and making us feel so welcome.



A Trip to 'The Blues'



Lockdown Creativity

## Lockdown Lives

Just before Easter, QAC went in lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although this was an unusual and difficult time for everyone, with most people working and learning from home, it was an opportunity for QAC to demonstrate our strength, values and creativity.

Staff came together to develop home working packs for students, keeping in touch with them with regular check-ins whilst at home. They also supported each other with regular communication, tips and recreating well known pieces of art as part of a global art challenge. Some staff also took on volunteering roles outside College to support their local communities during the pandemic.

As part of their studies, Art students were asked to create a piece of art inspired by the theme of happiness, coming up with some fantastic pieces. Hospitality students took the lead and dusted off their wooden spoons and bowls as part of a cupcake baking challenge, with other students and staff also getting involved. Lessons looked a lot different for those students who were able to attend College, with smaller groups and different activities, but they also got involved in a range of creative activities including Lego construction, tin foil sculptures and cardboard crafts.

Whilst at home, Leo from PFL Blue used watercolour painting as a way to not only manage his anxiety but also raise money for his Monday night club which supports adults with learning disabilities and autism. He created some wonderful artwork which he auctioned off, raising over £200 which is fantastic, well done Leo!



New Hospitality Teaching Spaces

## Campus Changes

Over recent months our Maintenance Team has been hard at work, creating additional breakout spaces in the Bradbury Centre and more teaching space alongside the QACafe facility, all of which look great. As always over the summer, they will be busy creating new spaces and ensuring College is ready to welcome people back in September.

An exciting new addition will be a permanent yurt, situated at the top of campus, fully accessible and complete with heating and lighting. This will be used for a range of sessions, including yoga and mindfulness activities.

The Karten Centre path will be widened and a landscaped garden area created to complement the yurt, and give green fingered groups somewhere to focus their gardening skills. Our large polytunnel will be moved to make it more accessible and usable, along with new gardening area next to Oakwood featuring raised planting beds. This space will also feature a new bespoke cabin for our sensory provision, again complete with heating and lighting, along with a range of sensory equipment and resources.

The team will be busy down at Umberslade, creating an outdoor shelter in the main meadow area, which will support curriculum delivery at the site. Many of our residential houses will be getting some TLC with repairs and decorating taking place.

There is bound to be more projects happening too and we cannot wait to see all their hard work finished.





# Fundraising

## Events

Through his running club, our very own Stuart, a member of QAC's Maintenance Team, was lucky enough to be successful in securing a place in the 2020 VirginMoneyGiving London Marathon, and chose to run for QAC. Training was going well, with the odd niggle and injury, and we were following his progress closely through our social media. Stuart was feeling really positive and excited to take part, but then Covid-19 struck and everything changed with the event being cancelled. Although he was disappointed, Stuart is still committed to supporting us and has postponed his marathon run to next year. He is looking forward to getting back into the training and we will again be following his progress on our website and social media.

Although our Summer Fete could not take place as normal this year, we still wanted to end the year in a fun way. So, we hosted our QAC Virtual Summer Fun Day, with students, staff and supporters joining in. There were staff 'how to' videos for a range of cookery, craft and other activities along with 'at home' musical performances from some of our talented students. Some of our fayre stallholders also got involved, arranging their own virtual craft fayre, each making a donation to QAC from sales over the weekend. It was a mixed day weather wise with sunshine and rain (typical Summer Fete weather!) but people still joined in. Thank you to everyone that got involved, whether sharing photos of their day with our #QACVirtualSummer or by donating online as part of our first virtual event.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 we had to cancel a number of Spring and Summer fundraising events which we were really looking forward to. However, the Fundraising Team is working hard to reschedule these events, along with some new ideas they are excited to launch when the time is right. Keep an eye on our website and social media for announcements.

Marathon Man Stuart



KES Football



Café Visitors



Product Donations

Virtual Fun Day Fun

Corporate Day Fun



## Corporate & Community

Local firm Taylors Bulbs kindly donated lots of garden bulbs for students to use in their gardening activities. They were put to great use by students and IP clients in and around College, residential gardens and Umberslade Nurseries.

First Corporate, Slaters, Next and Buttercups Uniforms donated suits, uniforms and other professional clothing for our Supported Interns to use for job interviews and work placements helping them make a great first impression.

It was great to welcome Dannii and Jim from The West Brom Building Society to College. They had a look around and were treated to a drink and some cake by our Hospitality group, before presenting us with a cheque towards our Outdoor Teaching Space project.

A fun morning was had by all when some of our corporate friends came to College for a Disability Awareness Day. They learned more about QAC before taking part in a range of disability focused challenges, making them think about how they could better support people with disabilities.

A big thank you to Staedtler, Edding, Artline, Workwear Express, PaperGang and Beatson Clark who donated products for use during this year's ArtsFest. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 it was not able to go ahead, but they will be put to great use with some being saved for next year's ArtsFest and some being used for other student activities.

Plastics for Games sent a big box of mixed plastic counters for PFL students to use. They will help students develop skills such as numeracy and identification, but will also be used for games, meaning they will have lots of fun.

King Edward's School hosted a Students vs Teachers football match, organised by one of their students, David, whose brother is one of our PFL students. The event raised £200 for QAC and saw the student team winning 1-0! A big well done and thank you to everyone involved.

Thank you to Metro Real Estate Group in Harborne who, after visiting College and meeting some of the students and staff, kindly donated £2500 towards running of our 'After College Clubs' next academic year, which is fantastic.

The local Soroptimist International branch closed and after supporting us for a number of years, the group made a final donation towards a student focussed project and the individual student awards for another three years. It has been great working with the group and we really appreciate their continued support.

A big thank you to staff and customers at Waitrose Harborne and Asda Barnes Hill who included us in their community green token voting schemes, resulting in us receiving donations. It was great to be put forward and supported by our local communities.

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)

# Life at Pinewood

Things at Pinewood have been busy since January, with our Supported Interns having more of their dedicated sessions onsite along with other activities.

Thanks to an amazing donation from The National Express Foundation, they also had the opportunity to apply for a grant to buy their very own equipment and resources, to support their programme studies now, and life beyond QAC, as part of our 'Fund Me' initiative. Applicants had to present to a panel about what they thought they needed – whether technical equipment, additional training or other kit – and how it would help them complete their programme and support them once it has finished.

There were some great presentations and we were pleased to offer grants to a number of interns, with shopping lists including assistive technology, specialist training courses and maintenance equipment and clothing. The grants will really help drive students going forward as the kit bought will be theirs to keep and use for years to come. Thanks to The National Express Foundation, we will be able to run our 'Fund Me' for the next two years, supporting even more of our Supported Interns.

As we come to the end of the year, we would like to take this opportunity to showcase some of the internship placements that have taken place this academic year:

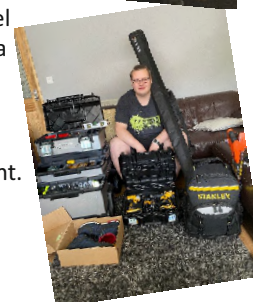
After being on the Performing Arts programme, **Guy** realised he loved anything creative and really wanted to learn more

from behind the scenes. A placement at The Birmingham Rep was perfect for him, giving him chance to get involved in script writing and creating short films. He was even invited to join the team on their virtual planning calls when lockdown happened.

**George** secured a placement with the Learning Engagement Team at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, where he helped organise events doing everything from admin work, preparing materials and supporting visitors. He really enjoyed his time on placement and back at College and the opportunities being an SI has given him.

**Ross** enjoyed spending his placement with the Maintenance team at Macdonald Burlington Hotel in the city centre, learning on the job to develop a range of skills. He will be able to develop these further after QAC, using his 'Fund Me' acquired kit and training to help, and since lockdown has completed his forklift truck driving and assessment.

From September, alongside our SI provision, Pinewood will be the home of our STRIDES programme, reflecting the main areas students will develop whilst on the programme; Supporting, Transition, Resilience, Independence, Developing Employability Skills. It will still be learner centred and will offer a skills rich experience for students to develop a range of practical and transferrable skills.



## Conferencing Facilities

QAC has a range of excellent facilities available for hire and offers fully accessible amenities and a unique friendly atmosphere. With excellent transport links to/from New Street Station and all major motorway links, QAC is the ideal venue for meetings, training days, team building away days and conferences.

Our high quality facilities range from small intimate rooms for 6-8 people to larger rooms which will easily accommodate 200 delegates. In addition, we have a large Sports Hall on campus which is marked for Badminton, Boccia, Basketball and Wheelchair Rugby and is available for hire evenings and weekends.

A new addition to the campus is our Commercial Training Kitchen. This high quality facility is available for small businesses and training companies for catering products, cooking demonstrations and classes.

All our facilities are accessible and available evening and weekends throughout the year. As a registered charity, by choosing QAC as your venue, not only will you benefit from our first rate facilities and friendly, helpful staff, you will be supporting our services for people with disabilities.

For more information about availability and current rates, please contact Karen at [keasthope@qac.ac.uk](mailto:keasthope@qac.ac.uk) or on 0121 428 5041



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For more information about what is happening at QAC and how you can get involved you can visit [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk) or follow us on social media



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