

SUMMER 2016

## Duke of Edinburgh

Our Duke of Edinburgh Award programme continues to be successful, with 7 students currently taking part, with 2 of them already passing their Bronze Award, now working towards their Silver.

In order to achieve their Awards, students have to complete a range of activities evidencing their work over a 3-6 month period. Although students are encouraged to choose new activities as part of their Award, the team also support them in College based activities that can be used as evidence, including volunteering at College sports activities and Enterprises, and learning new communication methods as part of their Award.

Students also have to take part in an expedition, requiring route planning and campcraft skills as they have an overnight stay on a campsite, which for some is a massive challenge to complete.



In May, our commitment to the programme was rewarded as staff members Debbie and Gaynor represented QAC at the Diamond Anniversary of the DofE Award at Buckingham Palace. During the event, also attended by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, HRH The Earl of Wessex and HRH The Countess of Wessex, they were presented with a special plaque by celebrity supporter, Michelin chef Marcus Wareing, acknowledging QAC's commitment to running the programme. Debbie and Gaynor were chosen out of thousands of people involved in delivering the DofE programme across the UK so it really was an honour and once in a lifetime

## Umberslade on the Up!

Lots of exciting things have been happening at Umberslade. Thanks to a donation from Morrisons Foundation we now have a traditional yurt and sensory garden area and thanks to teams at Amey we have a new path and seating area, opening up more of the site to be used.

Funding from Zurich Community Trust and Edgar E Lawley Foundation enabled us to run 'cake and craft' workshops for people with dementia and the over 50s, both proving really popular with local community groups and individuals. We

have secured funding from The Brian Shaw Memorial Trust for a nature watch project, so critter homes and habitats will be introduced soon. Over the summer we will be working with Gro-Organic to develop outdoor cooking and seating areas, complete with an 'earth oven'!

Many students still attend Umberslade and play a vital role in the work there but as you can see, there is lots more going on too!



## A Word from Angela & Bev



In Hugh's absence we have been 'acting up' in our roles and have seen a busy few months at College.

Our reputation as an excellent Independent Specialist Provider continues to grow. During this academic year we have received no less than 258 expressions of interest from students and families to join us. We have only 190 placements to fill! For QAC to receive this level of interest says we are the provider of choice, we lead by example and we get it right so our students are enabled and empowered to achieve their life goals.

Pressure on funding continues to be an issue and likely always will, but we are gifted with donations, legacies and in-kind support that help us fulfil our good work for which we are extremely grateful.

We couldn't do any of the work we do without our many supporters and stakeholders, not forgetting our wonderful staff who work with our students every day. So as another academic year comes to a close we would like to thank you all for supporting the work we do and believing in our organisation to make a positive difference to our students' lives.

**Angela Litchfield and Bev Jessop**  
Vice Principals

## Highlights

Strings Club



### JANUARY

The Dragons' Den panel was back in force as 18 groups pitched their ideas for 'investment'. As with previous rounds, a wide range of activities were put forward and the 'dragons' were pleased to fund all of them in some way. As a result, some students went to local attractions such as Cadbury World and West Midlands Safari Park, purchase equipment for their IT and Creative Media studies and go to eat at local restaurants.

Students (and staff) took part in a 'Show & Tell Day' where they were able to share their interests and showcase personal collectables/models that are important to them. We had a student playing the guitar, a display of puppets and an extremely popular display of Lego models by student volunteer Jason. It was a really fun and informative day for all involved.

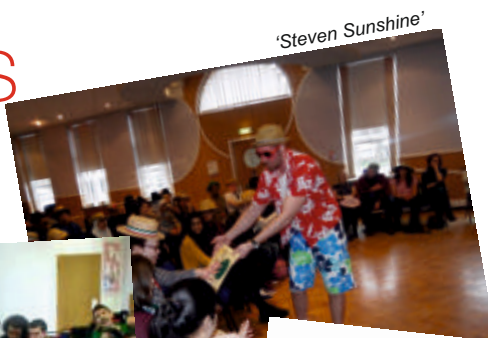
### FEBRUARY

As part of storytelling day, our very own storyteller 'Steven Sunshine' came to College to tell stories using 'bag books'. Bag Books are ideal for those who enjoy stories that are told interactively through voice, emotion and props. There was plenty of excitement, laughter and interaction from the audience as 'Steven' took them all on a trip to the seaside!

We hosted a "A Right not a Fight" event, with students from many different specialist colleges delivering brilliant presentations about their experiences of battling to receive funding for their chosen college place.

QAC students, staff and parents worked with the local charity 'Socks and Chocs' to collect items and donate them to local homeless people. The collection was presented to the charity's Chairman Ian Northcott (also known as the Busking Bobby), who also gave a rendition of his Busking Bobby song. This was a valuable learning experience for our students as they took part in a range of activities to explore the idea of homelessness and poverty and the impact they have.

'Steven Sunshine'



PFL Amber



### MARCH

The Strings Club, a local Harborne organisation that provides instrumental tuition, visited QAC bringing a large selection of ukuleles and violins with them. Students had the opportunity to try the different instruments creating short music pieces whilst also listening to jazz, popular and classical music being played in new and different ways.

'Sponsored Silences', 'Judo Throw Challenges', 'Kurling Competitions,' 'Treadmill Trials' and 'Shuttle Runs' were just a few of the activities organised to support this year's Sport Relief. Organised by the Sport Department, students from across college took part with scores and donations being tallied over the course of a week. Everyone's efforts were amazing and really paid off as lots of fun was had by those who took part, raising lots of money in the process.

Some students took part in the North Midlands Regional Inclusive Zone Basketball Competition at Wolverhampton University, coming home with runners up medals.

PfL Amber went to Cannock to do an external work placement at Truman Enterprise Narrow Boat Trust. It was a very cold day but this didn't deter the group as they scrubbed all the tables and chairs, crockery, cutlery, ceiling, walls, windows, wash basin, floor and front deck of the boat which was gleaming by the end of the day! They did such a good job they were invited back for a free boat trip in July where they enjoyed fish and chips delivered to the boat for lunch as they sailed down the canal.

Sport students travelled to Loughborough University, in order to take part in the Inclusive Futures Camp, delivered by Youth Sport Trust. They were joined by other volunteers and took part in a range of sessions and workshops,



Sport Students Volunteering



Sport Relief Judo

delivered by a number of athlete mentors. The aim of the event was to equip young volunteers with the skills to promote participation in sport, challenging perceptions around disability and creating inclusive provisions in their home cities.

### APRIL

Health & Social Care students Beth and Cher presented to a large audience at this year's Natspec Conference, being great ambassadors for QAC as they spoke of their experience of disability and the support a specialist environment offers them.

Vaisakhi, the Sikh Harvest Festival, is one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar, referring to the Harvest Festival of the Punjab region. Dance Sansaar came into college to help us mark the celebrations, with students – and staff – getting to learn new dances, play the drums and also learn about the history of the festival.



## MAY

Students got involved in a bit of modelling to showcase the official 2016 QAC hoodies and t-shirts. Designed and printed in-house it is the first year these have been available for students to buy and have proved really popular with those who are leaving as a way to celebrate their time at QAC and being a member of 'Class of 2016'.

PFL Orange enjoyed some wizardry and wonder as they visited Harry Potter Studios for their Dragons' Den trip. The group received VIP treatment as they arrived, with student Adam Smith celebrating his birthday early by opening the Great Hall doors for visitors! Everyone tried their hand at wand waving and broomstick flying, had a "ride" on the train and also enjoyed a butter beer ice-cream or a butter beer in the sunshine!

Students from PFL and Vocational groups, along with clients from IP, took to the stage to take part in the auditions for this year's QA Factor. The hall was filled with lots of singing and dancing, by performers and those in the audience, as the judges had the difficult task of choosing who they were going to put through to the final which will be part of our Summer Games in July.

Mark Beeby, a Disability Sports Coach from Leicester and two PhD students from Loughborough University brought an innovative, 'not on the market' VI running line to College. Students and staff were able to experience what it's like to walk and run without their sight and lots of people – some with a visual impairment and some without – took part.

We celebrated Local History Month by running a competition for students to win a trip to a local place of historic value where they would experience a tour and take part in activities. PFL Amber worked really hard on their entry and won a trip to Cadbury World learning more about the history of Cadbury and chocolate, no doubt tasting some along the way!

## JUNE

Two student football teams took part in the PAN Disability Football Tournament at The Hawthorns, home of West Bromwich Albion. Both teams did really well, ending the tournament with 1 win, 1 draw and 1 loss and everyone had a great time and are looking forward to being involved in more tournaments of this kind in the future!

Sport students were volunteering again, this time at the Youth Sport Trust / Special Olympics 'Play Unified' summit. Rather than running sports sessions, they (along with other

PFL Orange



PAN Disability Football



Student Models



Spectra



Inclusive Futures volunteers) had to facilitate and support workshops and activities, using skills such as creativity, communication and teamwork!

We held a garden party to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, with the choir performing the National Anthem and Happy Birthday, encouraging the audience to participate. Throughout the week groups worked on making flags and royal masks which they brought to the party where they also enjoyed cakes and refreshments served by the Hospitality group.

Thanks to PFL Green's fantastic Dragons' Den presentation, The Creepy Crawly Show came to QAC, bringing a menagerie of critters! Students got to see animals including snakes, a tarantula and exotic reptiles up close with some getting to touch and hold them. Thankfully there were no escapees, just a very excited audience!

We hosted the inaugural Natspec Games, and welcomed Portland College, Homefield College and Communication Specialist College Doncaster to compete in a variety of sports. The two main tournaments were the Boccia, with Portland being crowned winners, and Football, which saw QAC play extremely well to take the title. It was a fantastic day, enjoyed by all competitors and organisers as well as Claire Howard, the CEO of Natspec, who handed out the medals and trophies. Performing Arts students were involved with Spectra again this year, creating another show, this time called 'Seek and Find'. Audiences enjoyed a multi-sensory, immersive experience where they could taste, feel, see, smell and hear their way through Cannon Hill Park. Following weeks of intense rehearsal, student performances were professional and mesmerising, with proud staff watching in the wings.



The Queen's Garden Party



VI Running

## JULY

As this newsletter goes to print, we are gearing up to the end of another academic year. The last week of term will be filled with fun, laughter and competition as our annual Summer Games come to College. We will then be saying farewell to over 80 students who are finishing their programmes with us and moving to pastures new, whether this is further education, employment or something else. We also have a number of staff leaving us this year, and would like to take this opportunity to wish all our leavers the very best of luck in whatever they do next.

## Employment Pathways

Our Employability Pathways programme has been extremely successful this year achieving 76 external and 136 internal placements and we would like to share a few of these successes:

> Two supported interns successfully completed placements at the *Queen Elizabeth Hospital* where they helped with various administrative duties and designing training booklets.

> Two students have worked in the Mechanics Department at *The Belfry Golf Course* helping repair, maintain and valet vehicles and machinery, also enjoying a tour of the course in a buggy and lunch at The Belfry Hotel.

> Three students successfully completed full time placements at *Barclays Bank* working in a variety of departments, including Customer Service.

> Two students have worked at *Thrift Vintage Quinton*, one doing visual merchandising and serving customers, the other helping set up an online selling platform and completing E-Commerce activities.

Work placements are really valuable in providing students with opportunities to develop a range of skills and confidence in a real working environment and we are really proud of all our students. If you are interested in supporting our Employment Pathways provision please contact Chrissy at csadik@qac.ac.uk.

## Coffee Junction to close

Unfortunately, our social enterprise, Coffee Junction, will cease commercial trading on Saturday 9th July. The staff and students have worked hard to make this venue a success in the last three years, but it wasn't to be.

However, as one chapter closes, another will open. The training kitchen will remain in use to support our Hospitality programme, and that of other specialist schools, and is still available for private hire. The shop will continue to be a part of the Bearwood community hub and will now focus on a variety of student pop-up retail opportunities in the new academic year. Watch this space...

## Sportivate Successes

In the last newsletter we mentioned that thanks to Sportivate funding we had begun delivering trampolining sessions, working with Deb Danks from Activ8. Now complete, the project proved extremely popular with students, so much so that one student now attends Activ8 on a Saturday because he enjoyed it so much! Deb also enjoyed working on the project and has since secured other funding to enable trampolining sessions to continue at QAC.

Also thanks to Sportivate support, our basketball club involved students and clients working with qualified coaches to learn about Wheelchair and Inclusive Zone Basketball, with two members of staff training to be British Wheelchair Basketball Leaders.

More recently, Sportivate funding enabled us to deliver onsite archery sessions to students and clients, with a taster session in March being extremely popular, followed by an 8 week block of sessions where skills and enthusiasm were developed further.

## PHSE News

It has been an exciting year so far for the department as they have launched our new training courses for individuals, "Supporting Sex & Relationships in a Specialist Setting". Developed and delivered by our PSHE specialist Gill Leno, sessions have proved very popular and we are pleased to announce that dates have now been confirmed up until the end of the year. For more information and to book a place, please call 0121 428 5041 or email keasthope@qac.ac.uk. The team is also working on INSET-friendly short courses and workshops, details of which will be released shortly via QAC social media channels.

Out and about, the team has delivered specialist training for staff at Birmingham Children's Hospital. They have also presented at the Bardet-Biedel Annual Conference and the SHADA (Sexual Health and Disability Alliance) International meeting.

At College Gill supported members of the LGBT group in their Dragons' Den presentation, resulting in the group getting branded t-shirts for them to wear, to help raise awareness of the group and support others.

## Fire! Fire!

In April, PFL Green visited Woodgate Valley Fire Station as part of their 'Community Participation' unit. They had a great time meeting Blue Watch and seeing where they worked, also getting to sit on the engine, hold some of the equipment the crew use and work the hose as it pumped gallons of water out. They also got to experience the smoke room training facility where they had to find their way through the dark to 'rescue' someone.

In May, Blue Watch brought the fire engine to College, allowing more students to climb into the cabin and explore the interior of the truck and ask lots of questions about the truck and what it's like to be a fireman; some even got to try on the jacket and helmet for size.

We are now working with the team to organise fire safety visits where they will come out to College to work with our residential students and IP clients in their houses. Sessions will look at what is and is not safe when working in the kitchen, giving them tips on how to stay safe at all times.

A big thank you to Blue Watch, and the other crews at Woodgate Valley for all the help, support and activities you run with us, we really enjoy them!



Sportivate Archery

QE Interns



Blue Watch visit QAC





# Events

## Fundraising

The Birmingham 10k took place in May and 'Team QAC' was there to pound the streets. We had 18 runners take part, with 14 of them pushing themselves to the limit to win 'Runner Up' in the 'Mixed Team: Medium Business' and 'Women's Team: Medium Business' categories. Four more runners completed their own personal challenge, with two of them running the course blindfolded. James Bee and Derek McDonagh from the Macdonald Burlington Hotel are keen runners, and chose to take on the challenge after getting to know our governor 'Blind Dave' Heeley. Supported by Karl and Garry, two of Dave's regular guide runners, they took on the course and raised over £1,200 for us, also getting staff at the hotel

involved with their own 'Team James' vs 'Team Derek' challenge. In total our runners raised over £1800 for us which is a fantastic achievement. We're now gearing up for Team QAC's entries into the Birmingham half marathon in October and full marathon in 2017 – if you want to join us then get in touch!

Also in May we hosted our second Wheelchair Rugby Invitational, welcoming players from Sutton Coldfield RFC, Dixonians RFC and Harborne RFC and introducing our very own 'Team QAC' players. Yet again, lots of fun was had on the day as the Rugby Union variation of wheelchair rugby, overseen by Martin Beddis of Liverpool Lions Wheelchair Rugby, proved popular with the teams. The competitive spirit was high as Sutton Coldfield retained their title after winning for the second year running and the formed-on-the-day 'Odds and Sods' team being awarded the wooden spoon as runners up!

Our Summer Fete took place in June, filling the courtyard with a range of stall including crafters, Cats Protection League, Guide Dogs, books, Umberslade Nurseries and Coffee Junction BBQ, with Qi Energy and Hariba Belly Dancing Group joining the fun! New to the event this year were circus skills workshops, an archery competition and a fun dog show – all of which proved really popular with visitors. Despite some rain the event was a success, raising over £1,300 for QAC and our Enterprises. We're hoping Umberslade's Summer Fayre – taking place on Sunday 17th July – will be just as successful. It's the first such event hosted at Umberslade, with lots of stalls and activities planned for the day and we hope to see you there! For more information on the event contact Nicky on 0121 472 4894.

Looking ahead, we have our tandem skydive in September, Dinner in the Dark in December and more festive cheer with Christmas Craft Fairs at college and Umberslade. For more information about any of these events please contact fundraising@qac.ac.uk or 0121 428 5064.



Zurich Volunteers



Team QAC 'Blind Runners'



Birmingham 10k



Wheelchair Rugby



Wellington College Pupils

## Corporate & Community

We attended the annual charity lunch of The Provincial Grand Lodge of Warwickshire and received £1,000 towards our outdoors climbing and therapy project.

West Birmingham Christadelphians hosted their Charity Spring Fayre, raising money they distributed to local charities, with QAC receiving over £370.

We received £280 from Waitrose Harborne's Community Matters initiative, which allows customers to vote between three charities to receive a donation each month.

Following a visit from David Benson, one of their committee members, The Gentlemen's Night Out donated £1,500 to support the provision of Judo Club during the 2016/17 academic year.

The King's Head in Harborne hosted a couple of events for us, including a Smartphone Quiz and Summer Social featuring a tasty BBQ, interactive storytelling sessions, competitions and giant games. Lots of fun was had by all and it is hopefully something we can repeat in the future.

A team of Zurich employees visited Umberslade as part of their 'Zurich Cares' programme, working with PFL students to create a sensory garden around the yurt. They then took part in sighted guide sessions with our Mobility Team, experiencing what it's like to live with a visual impairment.

DWP have been keen volunteers with groups visiting Umberslade to help with more sensory planting and slate laying, woodwork painting and re-potting of over 100 plants!

As this newsletter goes to print, we are looking forward to more teams from Zurich and DWP coming to help at Umberslade and at our Summer Games – photos of which will be posted on our website and social network sites!

A group of year 9 pupils from Wellington College in Bedfordshire visited us as part of their Junior Social Apprentice programme. They came up with lots of ideas around how we can get young people involved in supporting QAC and Umberslade Nurseries. A great day was had by all!

**Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year! 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) or 0121 428 5064**



**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 Farmer 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.**

**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](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.**



**Follow QAC on Twitter:  
[@QAC\\_Official](https://twitter.com/QAC_Official)**



**Follow QAC on Facebook:  
Queen Alexandra College  
(QAC) Official Site**