

Greenfingers at Umberslade



In the last issue of our newsletter we told you about Umberslade Nurseries, a new garden centre project we had recently taken on. We are pleased and excited to announce that the doors, well gates, officially opened in April!

The one acre site, based on Umberslade Road in Selly Oak, is the latest addition to our family of Social Enterprises. Although a 'work in progress' lots of projects have already commenced, with retail, training and work experience opportunities taking place. The retail shop, open Wednesday-Sunday, 10-4pm, offers everything you need to help brighten your garden from tools and equipment to bedding plants and seeds.

As a working horticulture site, there is lots of gardening and maintenance to be done and this, along with the retail shop, offers plenty of opportunities for work experience and jobs for our students and clients. We have Independence Plus and advance2work clients based there getting their hands dirty and gaining valuable experience along the way.

Umberslade regularly welcomes some of our Pfl student groups who help to plant, dig and weed according to season. Recently, we have also had groups of volunteers



from Midlands Co-Operative Energy and Department for Work & Pensions taking a few hours away from the office to get their hands dirty.

Moving forward we have lots of ideas about how we see the site developing, offering more for our students and the local community. We hope to introduce a small tea room with opportunities for local artists and crafters to display their work. Outside, we are looking to develop a nature meadow, bee keeping and nature trail as well as a recognised Forest School project. These projects will create more volunteering opportunities and enable local schools and community groups to learn about wildlife and the natural environment around them.

It's a really exciting project for QAC and we'll keep you updated. For now, the Umberslade team look forward to seeing you soon!



| A Word from Hugh

Hugh J Williams
Principal



QAC is a vibrant community where our primary aim is to make sure the students and clients can reach goals to achieve independence and employment aspirations in the future. This newsletter is a testament to the vibrancy and enthusiasm of the College's staff, service users and supporters.

As I write, a group of students has fundraised for, and visited, the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales; another group has travelled up to Coniston in the Lake District for outdoor sports and a further group has taken part in a Natspec campaign at Westminster to make their specialist education 'A Right, Not a Fight'.

The 'A Right, Not a Fight' campaign aims to draw awareness to the fact that funding reforms have put power in the hands of local authorities, with assessments being done differently from one area to the next, creating a postcode lottery. We believe students with learning difficulties or disabilities should have the same right as other young people - to choose the college that will best meet their learning and support needs. A group of our students were active in a recent London event joining others to wave banners, sing and chant their cause, and talk to anyone who would listen - including lots of MPs and peers. We are extremely proud and thankful of the passion shown by those involved.

Coffee Junction at Bearwood is now established and the garden centre in Selly Oak offers exciting prospects for student and client involvement. We are looking to develop another vocational learning and work experience facility during the next year. Strategic Planning has also included the development of College-wide values to which we will all be proud to sign up.

Thank you to all of our supporters for helping us to achieve our goals.

Hugh.

Highlights



In January student groups took part in our very own 'Dragons' Den' competition, where they pitched their project ideas to a panel of judges, hoping to be awarded money to make the projects possible. Presentations were fantastic and resulted in a really diverse number of projects receiving funding including sports leaders' uniforms, art cameras, leavers' events, a residential art exhibition and student trips.

BTEC Art student Kane Rose organised a fantastic fashion show at the start of the year, creating a range of t-shirts and other garments showcasing his own designs. Students from across the College were enlisted as catwalk models for the occasion with money raised from tickets and garment sales going to the Art Department.

February was Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) month which celebrated the lives and achievements of the LGBT community. As part of this College had Round Midnight Theatre Company in to perform a play entitled 'Straight Talking', the story of two young men growing up together, their journey through life and the realisation that one of them is gay. The performance and workshops looked at issues around acceptance, support and friendship and tackled these issues in a sensitive and student friendly way.

Mardi Gras returned to QAC in March with many staff and students dressing in Mardi Gras colours of gold, purple and green as well as other bright colours! As a combined celebration with Pancake Day, Hospitality students took over the canteen to serve pancakes to other students and staff.

World Book Day also took place in March and to celebrate, Susanna Oldfield from Annamotion visited QAC to read stories to our PFL students. Susanna has previously been awarded the title of Storyteller of the Year and has worked with many autistic and SEN groups. Sessions used a range of props to enhance the stories being told and open up the world of books and stories to students.

Following a successful volunteering work placement officiating Boccia at the Birmingham School Games, six of our BTEC Sport students were invited by Boccia England to officiate at this year's Disability Sports Events Boccia Championships in Sheffield. Students worked hard and were an asset to QAC with one student, Kerri Webley taking part in the event and receiving an official classification!

Fashion Show



Zeph Gayle

Mardi Gras

Autism Awareness Day took place in April and QAC staff and students joined the fun, dressing in their onesies, pyjamas and silliest socks with some groups also making hand puppets using old socks.

Well done to student Jonathan Donaldson, who recently completed a 10k run for charity knocking two minutes off his previous personal best time in the process.

Congratulations to OCS Chef Manager Zeph Gayle who received an award for Outstanding Customer Service at the OCS Awards earlier this year. Zeph works hard to ensure menus are well balanced, healthy, tasty and exciting for our students so the award was thoroughly deserved!

Volunteers Week took place at the start of June and this year we invited our volunteers to a 'Thank You' Coffee Morning hosted by Hospitality students in our QACafe. Regular volunteers, gappers and representatives from our corporate volunteering teams joined QAC staff and students to enjoy some delicious homemade treats and share volunteering stories.

PfL Green and PfL Orange recently visited Dudley Zoo where they saw lots of different animals. PfL Green used the visit as part of their Health & Safety Unit, looking at the different signs and risks at the zoo. They also went to West Midlands Safari Park where they got to feed the giraffes from the minibus!

In June we were approached by The Children's Society to assist them with a consultation they were doing for Birmingham City Council to support strategic reviews of Children's Services, in particular the Education Review. Sessions helped develop a way of best presenting students' voices and opinions to the Birmingham Commission, as well as directly to Birmingham City Council.

Residential students have been extremely busy with various trips such as Ashwood House's unforgettable trip to Dublin and Mary Badger's seaside adventure at Brean Sands. Students have also taken part in various activities including art group, rifle club and supporting the summer fete with their own sweet stall and 'Hook A Duck' challenge.

PFL Red had a great time when they visited Conkers, a National Forest discovery centre based in Derbyshire. The group spent the day exploring the various attractions and trails and put their numeracy skills to the test in 'The Secret Life of Seeds' and 'Marvellous Maths' workshops.

SPOTLIGHT ON



QAC PRINT

As a department PMO supports many areas of College with the production of wooden crafts to sell and the distribution of marketing materials. Thanks to successful fundraising applications we have recently been able to introduce a QAC Print enterprise into the department.

We are now able to produce printed posters, t-shirts, baseball caps and mugs, as well as other items. Since buying the embroidery machine and heat press the team has been busy producing t-shirts to be sold in our Allsorts shop as well as marketing materials for our College Enterprises. The recent Summer Games also kept the heat press machine busy, printing over 100 t-shirts with the Summer Games logo!

Moving forward it is hoped that students can get more involved in using the equipment as a way to enhance their studies and curriculum, helping them develop more skills. It will be a great way for them to develop a range of practical customer service and business skills (e.g. stock control and order processing) as well as communication and teamwork skills.

Later in the year we hope to be able to take the printing enterprise wider, offering the service to external customers and clients to meet their printing and marketing needs.

Dudley Zoo



Volunteers Week

QAC does Sport Relief

March was Sport Relief month and never ones to shy away from a sporting challenge QAC wanted to get involved. Inspired by the success of last year's 24hr sponsored spin challenge, Sport & Recreation student Ryan Daniels decided this year had to be just as good.

So, led by Ryan, a team of six including students, IP clients and staff took on the big challenge of the week; a '24hr Treadmill Challenge', working together to keep three treadmills in motion for 24 hours. Fuelled by the support of others, the team completed the challenge and managed to find enough energy to run a lap around the field with a sprint finish, cheered on by staff and students. Students and staff also got

involved, jumping on the other treadmills and handbikes. The Sport & Recreation group also organised various taster sessions and competitions including 'Beat the Batter' and Judo. All in all we raised almost £1000 for Sport Relief - well done all!

PfL Silver student Chantelle Jephcoat took on her own Sport Relief challenge, taking part in the 'Birmingham Mile' at Cannon Hill Park. Chantelle used her wheelchair and Kaye Frame Walker to complete the mile challenge and cross the finish line. Since then she has also completed a 3000 meter 'Rainbow Run' in support of Helen & Douglas House, based in Oxford. Well done Chantelle! ●

Summer Games

The 11th - 13th June was QAC Summer Games time, with more competitions and more students and staff taking part, making the event bigger and better than ever.

Each student group 'adopted' a Commonwealth country for the occasion and PfL students did the honours of performing the opening ceremony showcasing their singing and dancing skills as the rest of College watched and cheered.

What followed was an exciting mix of gym challenges, athletic ability, creative cake decorating, welly wanging, team relays,

highly competitive team matches and obstacle courses that put everyone's agility to the test! Day two saw the final of our very own talent show QAFactor, with 15 acts wowing the audience with a range of talents whilst being judged by none other than 'Simon Cowell'!

With sun shining, over 150 Medals being given out, PfL Black (representing Malaysia) being announced overall winners and renditions of 'We are The Champions' ringing across the courtyard another Summer Games came to a close. Roll on next year's event! ●

Sport, Sport and More Sport!

Sport always features highly at QAC and we are extremely lucky to have links with local sporting organisations which enables us to develop more opportunities for students to take part in various sports.

- Since February, we have been working in partnership with the Disability Football Development Fund (DFDF), Aston Villa and University of Birmingham to enable a group of 10 students to develop their game and play Football on a state of the art 3G pitch. Weekly sessions have been delivered under the watchful eye of Head Coach, Nigel Macrow, who assures us that our entry into the Ability Counts League would not be out of place.
- During the spring term, QAC worked with Maddie Millichap from British Rowing and the QAC Feelgood Fitness Centre to deliver indoor rowing sessions as part of a Rowability Project in Birmingham. 9 students were included in a virtual league, taking part in rowing challenges including individual distance and timed events. Sessions were developed during the summer term to include 3 outdoor Rowing sessions on Edgbaston Reservoir, working with Head Coach Hannah Read (Youth Rowing in Birmingham).
- Following taster sessions of Wheelchair Rugby delivered by Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby (GBWR), 2 students (Kerri Webley and Suraj Dail) out of the original 5 have since been selected to play for the newly formed team West Midland Warriors. Talent was also showcased at a Wheelchair Rugby event in Stoke on Trent in April, with a link to an interview with Suraj on our Facebook page.
- 7 students and 4 staff took part in this year's Lake Coniston trip where they had the opportunity to have a go at a range of watersports and rock climbing activities.

Sport Relief



Summer Games



Students Hit the Stage

In May, our BTEC Performing Arts students were involved in a new performance project, Spectra, created in partnership with Kate DeRight, mac Birmingham and QAC.

The aim of the production was to draw on the different and exceptional abilities of its cast, using gentle lighting and sound, and an accessible narrative, enable the audience to connect to the performers in different ways.

It was a great opportunity for our students to be involved in something so special, having the opportunity to work with and

learn from a range of professionals. Despite the hard work and effort, staff and students thoroughly enjoyed taking part, as did those who were lucky enough to see it from the audience perspective! Well done to everyone involved. ●



The World of Work

Congratulations to two of our students who have recently got a real feel for the world of work.

Daniel McCloskey, a BTEC IT student has been doing an internship at the BBC and following a recent review has been offered some paid employment there over the summer. Thrilled and excited at the news Daniel said 'I can't believe I'm going to be paid to work at the BBC. I am so happy'.

Kirsty Spalding, another BTEC IT student, recently started work experience with Gems TV. An amazing opportunity for Kirsty, she spends her time working with designers and making bracelets and necklaces... she even had some of her jewellery showcased on their Jewellery TV channel!

Well done to Daniel and Kirsty for successful work placements! ●

Campus Development

The last few months have been very busy here on campus with building works taking place across the site.

- Building work on the Sports Hall started back in March and are now well underway with the steel frame being erected. We look set to have the sports hall up and running during the autumn term so look out for photos in our Winter newsletter!
- Alongside the sports hall, as we mentioned in the last newsletter, we also have works taking place in other buildings on site. Major works are taking place in our old Maintenance Building to transform it into four state of the art classrooms. The building has been stripped out completely and all rubbish

removed from site with the existing ground floor being removed to make way for a new solid thermal efficient one. The downstairs internal block walls have also been built so the actual layout can now be realised. Over the coming weeks the remainder of the work will be carried out with a view to completion in time for the autumn term.

- We have improvement works taking place in Oakwood with new windows being installed and other interior improvements on the job list over the summer break when access is possible.
- We will also be carrying out major refurbishment works to Evolution over the summer, making it look and feel 'new' in time for the autumn term.

Summer Fete

June is always a busy month and immediately after the Summer Games came our Summer Fete.

With lots of stalls from books to plants, sweets to crafts and games such as 'hook-a-duck' and 'chocolate tombola' there was plenty for people to spend their money on! Thanks to Hariba Belly Dancing Group and Peter's Walkabout Puppets there was also plenty to keep people entertained.

Although we're always a well behaved bunch at QAC, we also had Quinton Community Safehaven Police team on-hand with their public order van "just in case", which proved very popular with adults and children alike!

A big thank you to everyone who got involved and supported the event, helping to raise over £1200 for QAC projects, which is fantastic! ●



EDI at QAC

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) enriches our students in terms of their understanding and appreciation for the cultural diversity and the differences that exist between themselves and others.

There have been a number of EDI themed days that students have taken part in this academic year, including World Religion Day, LGBT Month, Autism Awareness Day and the ever popular Takeover Day which involved numerous students getting into the driving seat and turning the tables on employers, where the students themselves would be in charge for the day!

EDI was also apparent within our Summer Games, with each group choosing a Commonwealth country they would represent throughout the competition. As part of this students had to research their country in terms of history, culture, foods and interesting facts which they used to create displays about their country which were used as part of the Summer Games Quiz.

Duke of Edinburgh Expeditions

Well done to students Michaela Brown, Kirsty Carville, Menaz Akhtar, Zack Brookes, Megan McCormack and Olivia Walker who recently completed two overnight camping trips in preparation for their Duke of Edinburgh training.

The first was to Blackwell Adventure in Bromsgrove in early June, followed by Derbyshire a week later. These training expeditions were organised to enable students to practice a range of outdoor skills such as orienteering, map reading, camping and expedition planning as well as the countryside code, all of which they will use as part of their Duke of Edinburgh qualifying expedition.

None of it was easy and it was a huge challenge for the students, putting their determination and characters to the test. However, despite the exhaustion, the group thoroughly enjoyed both trips and were proud of their achievements, and rightly so! At the time of the newsletter going to press they were busy planning their final expedition which takes place at the end of June.

Get Involved!



- In April, QAC held its first Dinner in the Dark event, in conjunction with the Hilton Garden Inn, Brindley Place. Over 40 guests enjoyed a meal with a difference; as the restaurant was plunged into darkness, diners felt and smelled their way around a mouth-watering two course meal. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all, with people finding it thought provoking as well as one diner who said they had not laughed so much in a long time. Following the success of April's event we're pleased and excited to be holding another one on Thursday 20th November.
If you would like to know more or book tickets then please contact Sunita on sottridge@qac.ac.uk

- Well done and thank you to Mandy and Ewan Hamnett who represented Team QAC at this year's London Nightrider. Having taken part in 2013, they got the bug and took part in the event again this year, completing the 62 mile route in just under six and a half hours, raising over £400 for us!
- Well done to Jenny Hill who took part in the Midlands Fun Run. Jenny, previously an A2W client and now a member of staff at our Feelgood Fitness Centre completed the race around Cannon Hill Park in 2hrs 20minutes and raised almost £200 for QAC!
- June saw Team QAC take part in Mudrunner for the first time. 12 people, including student George Nicholls took part in the 6 mile race. Runners came face to face with tests of strength, endurance and co-ordination with ten obstacles for them to climb up, around, over and through. Gruelling, tough and intense, the team survived and crossed the finish line with smiles (and not too much mud!) on their faces. An amazing effort by everyone, helping to raise valuable funds to support QAC and our students.
- Our annual tandem Skydive is taking place in September.
If you would like to sign up to take part, or would like to do a jump for us on a day to suit you, then please contact scaldwell@qac.ac.uk
- This October will be our first ever 'Get Involved Month' and we're looking for people to do just that.... get involved and support us. There will be various team volunteering opportunities available alongside other events such as our annual Bright 4 Sight Campaign and National Baking Week activities.
For more information and to register your involvement please contact Sarah on scaldwell@qac.ac.uk

Corporate & Community



Steve Love

After officially opening Coffee Junction last year, local Chef Steve Love has been a keen supporter of QAC. Steve, owner and head chef of Loves Restaurant, recently took time out of running his restaurant to deliver a pasta making workshop to our Level 2 and Short Course Hospitality students.

The first week saw him share his culinary expertise with students, showing them how to make pasta dough from scratch, experimenting with it and using pasta machines to make different pasta shapes including spaghetti, tagliatelle and bows. The following week saw Steve return and students put their new found skills to the test to create their very own pasta dishes for Steve to taste and judge. We're really looking forward to working with Steve and his restaurant team in the future, with different masterclass workshops being organised.

St Augustine's

Saint Augustine's Catholic High School in Redditch organised a range of fundraising activities as part of their Lenten Charity Drive back in April, including 'Gunge the Teacher' and 'Take Me Out'. Students and staff worked hard to raise lots of money and as one of their chosen charities, QAC received over £350 which has been put towards our sports hall appeal. We've also worked closely with Saint Augustine's, welcoming groups of students in to College to find out more about us and see for themselves what life with a disability could be like. Thanks to everyone that took part in the fundraising efforts, we look forward to working with you again!

Volunteering at QAC

At QAC we are really lucky to have links with a range of companies that get involved and volunteer with us. This can be anything from painting to gardening, helping out at sports events or getting creative with the glue and glitter. It really means a lot to us that companies and individuals take the time to come and meet our students, getting to know them and learn more about the reason we do what we do.

Since the last newsletter we've welcomed groups from DWP who have helped with the students' Christmas Bazaar and Summer Games preparation and refereeing, Midcounties Co-Operative who spent the day at Umberslade Nurseries transforming an overgrown area and HSBC Harborne who have helped with preparations for the Summer Games and Summer Fete. We have also built a strong link with UCB, in particular Events Management students who supported us with our Dinner in the Dark event as well as other activities.

We really appreciate all the support we get from our Corporate and Community supporters and value the time, energy and effort they put in to working with us. Our students particularly enjoy spending time with them!

If you and/or your organisation would like to get involved then please contact Sarah on scaldwell@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
Birmingham
15th & 16th July
New for 2014 Leeds
25th September
London
4th November

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

autism central

Autism Central returns on **14th October** again hosted by QAC at Villa Park, 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 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**



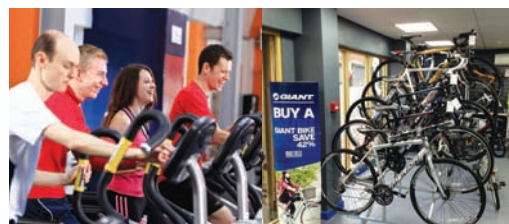
QAC is the UK distributor of acclaimed Revolution Carbon Fibre Canes which are lighter in weight and more durable than traditional aluminium canes.

Contact us on **0121 428 5041**

Conference & Training Facilities available for hire

We have excellent conference and training facilities available to hire.

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**



COFFEE JUNCTION

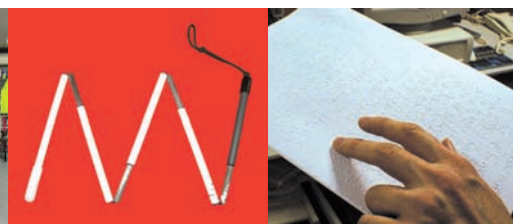
Coffee Junction, our family friendly café offers a range of quality teas, coffees and food. Young people with disabilities also get the chance to gain valuable industry skills with the fully equipped training kitchen based above the café in Bearwood.

Contact us on **0121 420 1990**



Located in Selly Oak, Umberslade Nurseries is a rural idyll in an urban setting comprising of a small retail outlet & various horticultural facilities for hire.

Contact us on **0121 472 4894**



● 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 or by following us on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.



Follow QAC on Twitter:
@QAC_Official



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



QAC on You Tube:
MyQAC



Queen Alexandra College
Court Oak Road Harborne
Birmingham B17 9TG
Tel: 0121 428 5050
Fax: 0121 428 5048
E-mail: info@qac.ac.uk
www.qac.ac.uk

Registered Charity No. 1065794
Registered in England No. 3387540

