

Our Sports Hall is Here!



In November 2012 we officially launched our 'Fit for the Future' fundraising campaign, aiming to raise £1.37m to build and equip an onsite sports hall for QAC. Now, two years later, the end is here, building work has been completed and finishing touches are being made to the classrooms and changing areas.

This has been a long awaited and much needed project for QAC and we are pleased to announce that, despite a few delays, by the time this newsletter is distributed our Bradbury Sports Centre will be the new home for Sport & Recreation students.

Until now, indoor sport and physical activity sessions have been limited due to space with only a few students being able to access offsite sessions. Our new facility will mean more sports can be brought onsite, opening up opportunities for students to take part in more sports more often, helping them build valuable skills as well as mobility and fitness levels.

One such sport we are looking forward to running is wheelchair rugby. Our Sport & Recreation department has recently been working closely with Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby (GBWR) to deliver sessions to students, with two of them going on to join a local team.

As a result of the popularity of these sessions we want to bring the sport (along with others) onsite so that more students can take part. Following discussions with GBWR they have offered to support our

project and are willing to give us access to their fleet of wheelchairs if we are able to buy one of our own. This will mean we will have enough for a match (with two teams of four) to take place. The wheelchairs in question cost around £3,500 and we are currently fundraising to hit this target.

All students will have the opportunity to use the wheelchairs, giving each of them the chance to experience the sport on an equal playing field. It will help them develop teamwork and confidence along with an understanding of a sport they may not otherwise have access to.

The Bradbury Sports Centre will be officially opened on 13th January with a 'cutting of the ribbon' ceremony followed by demonstrations and taster sessions in a variety of sports, including wheelchair sports, hosted by students. Photos from the event will be posted on our website and social networking sites, so please take a look.

On seeing inside the sports hall for the first time, Sport & Recreation students said it was 'amazing' and 'like a dream come true. They, along with staff, are now really looking forward to unleashing even more sporting potential, along with lots of fun!

The arrival of our new sports centre would not have been possible without the support of a lot of individuals, Trusts and Foundations. We would like to take this opportunity on behalf of students, staff and Governors at QAC to say thank you to everyone who has supported and/or donated to the project.

A Word from Hugh



Hugh J Williams
Principal

QAC has faced a challenging start to the academic year with reduced income from student fees. We also continue to face uncertainty over the longevity of the funding available for our employment-focused residential training programme for adults. Despite these difficulties, College staff deliver an exceptional programme of education, training and support to students and clients.

So much has been going on amidst academic programmes and student/staff fundraising activities. There has been political campaigning, emphasis on work placements, the start of a 'Healthy Hearts' initiative and a Performing Arts Project being undertaken at the Midlands Arts Centre. QAC's innovative 'Independence Street' is now open: this is a unique road safety experience for those with visual impairment and mobility needs. This project would not have been achieved without Amey, so I extend a grateful thank you to them.

Some of these events and stories will feature in this newsletter but if they don't, get in touch with the College if you would like to find out more or get involved in some way: scaldwell@qac.ac.uk

Thank you to everyone who supports QAC. I hope to see you at the official opening of our Sports Hall in January 2015. Until then, on behalf of students and staff, a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to All.

Hugh.

Highlights



Black History Month



Cosford Air Museum

Talk Like a Pirate Day



The start of term saw us welcome lots of new students to college and with them a range of new activities. One of these was Sensory/Relaxation club on Wednesday afternoons where staff work with students on guided relaxation, simple yoga and massage. The group also gets to feel, look at, listen to and smell a variety of objects, developing their sensory skills.

We have various enrichment 'Club' sessions where students learn new skills and work with different students and staff. From 'Looking My Best' to 'Learn to Draw', 'Dance', 'Choir' and 'Sensory Relaxation' there are lots of clubs on offer, led by our Learning Support Assistants. Students select which club they want to join at the start of term and get involved with a range of activities as a result.

September 16th is National Teaching/Learning Support Assistants' Day, designed to illustrate the positive impact LSAs have on schools, teachers, students, colleges and parents. QAC's LSAs play a vital role in life here, working hard to support and encourage students, often having to dance, dress up and lead by example. National LSA Day was a great way to celebrate and thank our LSAs, with poems and displays created by students and staff.

International "Talk Like a Pirate Day" came to QAC shores in September with students and staff dressing pirate-style with hats, bandanas, eye patches and lots of gold. Pirate speak rang through the corridors as students enjoyed looking for treasure, holding staff to ransom and forcing them to 'walk the plank'.

Once again we supported Macmillan in September with various fundraising activities, including a Coffee Morning hosted in the Café by Hospitality students, raising over £230 which is fantastic.

In October Pfl Green visited Cosford Air Museum. The sun shone and the group had a great day learning about aeroplanes, helicopters and even tanks! Everyone especially enjoyed the 'fun zone' where they got to test their eyesight, experiment with wind resistance and even have a go at flying an aeroplane!!

World Sight Day is all about raising awareness of visual impairments and to celebrate this QAC runs 'Bright 4 Sight' activities. Lots of 'bright' competitions were organised with groups and individuals really getting into the spirit of things, wearing their brightest clothes and outfits as well as decorating their classrooms.

Another October event we regularly celebrate is Black History Month. This year we invited Dance Sansaar into College to increase cultural understanding through visual arts, dance and music. Lots of students attended the workshops, where they got to learn new words in Punjabi, the history of certain dances, play the dohl drums and see some traditional costumes worn by dancers and drummers.

Thanks to funding from Heart Research UK, QAC has kicked off our very own Healthy Hearts project with a dedicated day in October. Hospitality students offered fresh fruit smoothies, Health & Social Care students ran health clinics and Sport & Recreation students tested fitness levels. This is a year long project with focused weeks planned for February and June, so a full report will be in our Summer newsletter next year!

QAC students and staff joined in with Harvest Festival celebrations this year with people bringing in non-perishable food, e.g. rice, pasta, tins and packets. These were given to Birmingham Central Foodbank (BCF) who provide emergency food and support to local people in crisis and who distributed the donations to families as the need arose. Angela Dunnett, BCF Manager said "The food donated by QAC was enough to feed a family of 4 over 39 meals". As part of this project, groups of students are set to visit the Foodbank in the upcoming weeks.

Here at QAC we are keen supporters of Children in Need and this year was no different. Pudsey would have been proud of all of the activities that went on including a huge cake sale raising £60 and the annual 'Penny Trail', led by Pfl Green. Students and staff from across College donated their unwanted pennies which were then used to line the floor of the Bradbury Centre, making pretty patterns and raising over £130!

On 28th November the BTEC Performing Arts group visited The Blue Orange Theatre to watch the production: 1914 Local News. The Tell Tale Theatre Company production gave the audience a glimpse of the lives of those who lived through the dark days of war with some real stories from the exact day back in 1914 being told. Students thoroughly enjoyed the show and worked hard to raise money for the trip selling raffle tickets around College earlier in the month.



Children in Need

SPOTLIGHT ON



BEARWOOD

In October 2013, we launched our new off-site facility in Bearwood, the location for two of our enterprises - iCycle and Coffee Junction.

Our cycle business has been established for almost twenty years. Initially based on campus, it enjoyed a brief spell in Harborne before moving to Bearwood. The team of experts are able to complete services and repairs as well as advise and supply new bikes to customers. We have a large group of loyal customers and continue to attract new business.

Coffee Junction was established as a completely new venture when we launched the site in Bearwood. The café is a refreshing addition to the high street. The inclusion of a toddler activity area (Coffee Jungle) has proved popular with families in particular and the friendly atmosphere is ensuring customers are returning to us regularly.

Above the café is an industry standard training kitchen, which is incredibly popular with, and beneficial for, our students. We were even lucky enough to welcome top local chef, Steve Love, to host a pasta-making master class with our students and are looking forward to similar events in the future.

Located in a prime position, the two ventures continue to go from strength to strength and have already become firm favourites with the Bearwood community. The staff at iCycle and Coffee Junction look forward to welcoming you!



Student,
Tom Preston
with his
Power Chair
Football Award



Independence
Street



Work Experience Week

Baking Week



PSHE at QAC

Our PSHE staff have had a busy start to the academic year working with our new students on their first-year basic sex and relationships courses and lots of external work.

In October, our PSHE Specialist, Gill Leno talked at BILD's Undateable? Not Me! event in Bristol about supporting capacity for consent and also at our very own Autism Central, about the importance of relevant, accessible and inclusive sex and relationships education.

Gill delivered a lecture to nurses at Coventry University about the importance of informal sex and relationships education for adults with learning disabilities and travelled to Leeds for a transition event with HemiHelp, the national charity for young people with hemiplegia and their families.

November is LGBT History month, as well as Transgender Awareness Week (14-20 November) and Anti-Bullying Week (17-21 November). As part of this Gill supported one of our students to deliver a twilight session for staff around transgender awareness, which was an amazing personal achievement for the student. During Anti-Bullying Week, Gill hosted a live online Q&A webchat for Scope around bullying as part of her role as their PSHE forum expert.

There has been lots going on! Thankfully Gill now has a volunteer to work with her one day a week, Andrew Travers. Andrew also works for Brook (the young people's sexual health charity) and is a BSL interpreter.

Sporty Students!

Whilst we have eagerly awaited completion of our Sports Hall, students have been busy accessing community sporting activities and building links with representatives from National Governing Bodies. Some students have been involved in volunteering at sporting events around the country, including Boccia and Fencing competitions, where they were lucky enough to meet Olympic/Paralympic athletes!

Activities this term have included:

- A female only Disability Football Festival at Four Dwellings School.
- Completing a 5k Wheelchair Fun Run for Charity at Sandwell Valley.
- Running the Bupa Great Birmingham Half Marathon.
- Being offered the position of Assistant Tennis Coach for under 8's at Edgbaston Archery & Lawn Tennis Society.
- Being promoted in Powerchair Football, and receiving official recognition at the Powerchair Football awards ceremony hosted at The West Bromwich Albion Foundation.
- Playing for the West Midlands Warriors (Wheelchair Rugby).
- Winning the Table Cricket Community League area finals.

- Rowing with British Rowing at QAC's Feelgood Fitness Centre.

Sporting commitment, enthusiasm and hard work by staff and students has continued to inspire and motivate others across the College, and weekly sessions of Football and Judo are now being attended by more than 20 students. After college clubs have also proved popular with sessions in Boccia, Badminton, Football, Body Pump and Staff Rumba.

QAC's 'Independence Street'

Thanks to Amey, Birmingham City Council's highway partner, QAC now has a new and unique training facility. Named 'Independence Street', the travel training site is designed to assist students to safely negotiate the street environment.

This fantastic onsite facility, worth around £50,000, was built at no cost to the College by employees from Amey, with all the materials donated by the company and their suppliers. The site was named following an internal competition - with the successful name, 'Independence Street' being suggested by two of students, Hiwa Saidi and Olivia Bennetto.

Independence Street was officially opened by Councillor Lisa Trickett, Birmingham's Cabinet Member for Green, Smart and Sustainable City, as well as 'Blind Dave' Heeley (former student and current Governor at QAC), along with representatives from Amey and our students.

Working with our Mobility and Orientation team, students will be able to use Independence Street to practice 'real-life' travel scenarios in a safe environment prior to navigating their way around the local streets.

Right not a Fight Event

Natspec has been working on behalf of students to influence the 2014 Children's and Families Act which could mean a better future for young people with disabilities and their families. However, for them it still feels like a "postcode lottery" and they still have to fight to gain the right to specialist provision. They want to be given clear information about what is available and how they can access it. They want the Right not to Fight!

On 4th November, over 40 student ambassadors and staff from a number of specialist colleges from around the UK came to QAC's Right Not a Fight Campaign event to share their views on education and why specialist college provision makes such a difference to their futures.

Various students presented to the group using a range of media and explained why their college was so important to them. A selection of these presentations can be viewed at:

www.facebook.com/arightnotafight

Before the event, a number of QAC students applied to be the college's Right not a Fight

ambassador and QAC is pleased to announce that the successful student is Beth Sales with Rachel Ewing and Robert Whittle appointed as deputy ambassadors.

As more Right Not a Fight events are planned, these students will attend on behalf of QAC, putting forward our student views and reporting back to QAC's student council.

Work Experience Week

This year saw the first work experience week at QAC in conjunction with NATSPEC and Fair Train, aiming to raise the profile and importance of work experience to both students and employers.

Over 12 organisations got involved including the BBC, Hobbycraft, Alexander Mann, National Grid, Cadbury's, Halfords, Sport Birmingham, Sampad and The Big Lottery Fund, working with vocational groups to deliver presentations and workshops. Woodgate Valley Fire Station also joined in with students hearing all about what it is like to work for the fire brigade as well as getting to sit in the engine and try on some of the protective clothing.

QAC students and staff fully embraced the work experience focus and internal work placements were offered across College.

Work experience and placements play an important part in helping us prepare students for life beyond QAC and we're always looking for ideas and opportunities to broaden what we can offer. For further information, or if you could offer a work placement opportunity for a student, please contact Kerenza Palmer on: **0121 428 5055** or **kpalmer@qac.ac.uk**

Baking Week

The 13th to 17th October was National Baking Week and as always QAC got involved thanks to Hospitality Groups 1 and 2 and PFL Green.

There was a huge cake sale, with delicious treats ranging from millionaires shortbread to chocolate cupcakes with some made by students and others by staff! Students from PFL Green manned the 'decorate your own fairy cake' stall, there was a fantastic raffle, a 'guess the weight of the cake' competition and the opportunity to create a cupcake flavour to be made and sold at Coffee Junction.

At the end of the week the Hospitality Level 1 group took part in a cake 'selling' event at The Big Lottery. They worked really hard to bake a variety of delicious cakes and biscuits and had the opportunity to practice their customer service skills on the stall.

Our Baking Week activities made an amazing £350 which will be used by the Hospitality groups to go on a variety of trips.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who got involved in Baking Week including The Big Lottery for hosting our sale

and companies JML, Tala and JM Posner who donated a range of items used during the week.

Independence Plus Café

The IP Café has been running for about 18 months now and from small beginnings the team of 7 clients have developed a good team, serving staff and students alike.

Every client holds a Level 1 certificate in Food Hygiene and each week they rotate between 'front of house' taking orders and working on the till to being 'behind the scenes' preparing drinks and plating up cakes.

The group work together as a team building confidence and communication skills. Maths skills are used when calculating people's bills and correct change.

The group occasionally host special days, inviting friends and family. They have served Indian foods and have hosted birthday and leaving parties for IP clients. The clients enjoy working in the café and look forward to offering more treats in the New Year!

Festive Frolics

The festive season is always great fun here at QAC and this year was no different. The hall and dining room were full for our Christmas Craft Fayre in November, with over 30 stallholders showcasing a range of crafts and gift ideas.

In 2013 we introduced Winter Woolly Day to our festive calendar and it returned this December to coincide with the PFL Christmas Bazaar. DWP volunteers joined QAC students and staff donning their festive onesies, Santa outfits and Christmas knits to take part as lots of gifts were bought and treats tasted. Students also created their own Winter Woolly Jumper designs with prizes awarded for the most festive entries.

The chocoholics amongst us once again fought it out to win one of our Christmas Chocolate Hampers, with raffles being held at QAC as well as at Hilton Garden Inn, Tyndallwoods, Barclays Wealth and DWP.

Proceeds from our Christmas fundraising will go towards a QAC 'Dragons' Den' style project, with students pitching ideas to a panel of judges to 'invest' in. We did this for the first time last year and some great projects were made possible as a result; trips, equipment and art projects to name a few. We look forward to seeing what the student ideas are in the New Year!

Most Festive Group Winners - the Mobility Team



Stakeholder Feedback

● Induction Survey 14/15

When questioned about their induction at QAC 98% of the students said that the induction helped them to get to know staff and 93% said that the activities they did in the induction were enjoyable. Students told us they enjoyed "getting to know who was in my new group such as meeting new people and getting to learn new things" and "getting to know everyone better". This feedback will help us develop and improve the induction further for 2015.

● Parents Survey - July 2014

Overall feedback from parents was very good with 92% of parents agreeing with the statements and 97% agreeing that their son/daughter was happy at QAC, was making good progress and that the teaching was good.

One area identified for improvement was that some parents found it hard to attend the parent forum meetings due to timings. Moving forward, QAC is looking at different times and days to allow flexibility.

Parents told us "From the moment my daughter started at QAC, I felt she was in the right place. The staff are excellent, and have been very co-operative throughout" and "Staff and personnel treat my son as a person, not a number, and treat him with the respect that he deserves".

At the Parents' Consultation Event in November, 98% of parents stated that they were pleased with their son/daughters progress, found the event useful to discuss progress with the tutor and that staff at QAC are friendly.

● Equality Diversity & Inclusion

QAC successfully achieved the Investors in Diversity Stage 2 accreditation in August 2014, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for all students, staff and stakeholders.

IID Advisor, Jo Barton wrote "QAC already had exemplary practice in terms of the support for disabled students at the College when I first started working with them. Since the IID journey commenced, EDI has become further embedded within the College and is now an integral part of College life for both staff and students".

Get Involved!



- Halloween saw spooky goings on at Umberslade as we welcomed local children and families, complete with fancy dress costumes, to our first 'Pumpkin Day'. A ghoulish grotto was set up with pumpkin carving, trick or treat tombola and a crafts table for visiting children (and their parents!) to get creative. A puppet storyteller provided more entertainment and everyone got to go on a nature trail around Umberslade looking for worms and other creepy crawlies.
- Team QAC's annual skydive took place in September with one of our students getting involved and leaping into the clouds at 13,000ft. Despite her initial nerves, Cher really enjoyed taking part and challenging herself.
- Once again diners braved the unknown and delved into an exciting evening at the Hilton Garden Inn, Brindley Place as QAC hosted its second Dinner in the Dark. Following the success of our April event, in November we had 46 diners join us to find and feel their way through a two course meal. Dinner in the Dark aims to raise awareness of the challenges people with a visual impairment face on a day to day basis whilst also providing diners with a unique dining experience. Thank you to everyone that came and supported QAC at this event and look out for details of the next Dinner in the Dark in the New Year.
- iCycle and Coffee Junction have teamed up to host our first Santa Cycle event in December, so if you see a group of cycling Santas on your travels around the local area, it's probably them!
- There will be lots of events taking place in 2015, starting with a 30k Triathlon Challenge taking place in our Feelgood Fitness Centre. Team QAC will be taking part in Mudrunner again in June and our Skydive in September, so if you're up for a challenge then please get in touch. For those who enjoy more relaxed events the Summer Fete will also return in June and we're hoping to organise a food fayre for the spring. Keep checking our website and social networking sites for updates or for more information please contact:
scaldwell@qac.ac.uk



Co-Operative & Barclays Teams



Corporate & Community

We would like to thank Highfield Bowling Club who recently held a 'Captain's Day' event with bowlers from across the region taking part in various competitions and fundraising activities. The annual event takes place to raise money for local charities and this year Club Captain Chris Batey chose QAC, along with Mary Stevens Hospice, to receive a donation with Sunita and Sarah from the Fundraising team attending a cheque presentation in November.

Brandhall Community Choir recently came to College to perform for IP Clients and Residential Students. Singers, along with musicians, took to the stage performing a mix of modern and well known songs as the audience joined in singing along and dancing in the aisles. The choir were fantastic, enjoying the event just as much as we did with students and clients joining them on-stage in the second half to sing harmonies with them.

QAC has been lucky this term to receive a lot of in-kind donations from a range of companies donating products to support student learning. We would like to thank the following companies for their support; Portmeirion Group, Staedtler, Simply Wigs, Price's Candles, Helix, The Sticker Factory, Stratford Sewing Machines, White Lodge Fabrics, Just Fabric, Sizzix, Stoneglow Candles and Hamilton Acorn Ltd. We would also like to thank members of the public who have made in-kind donations of food which get shared between our residential clients and students, helping to stock their kitchen cupboards!

Get Involved Month

Volunteering plays an important part in life at QAC, from regular volunteers and Gap Year students to corporate teams. To celebrate this, and to encourage more organisations and individuals to get involved, do something to support us and find out more about the work we do, this October we organised 'Get Involved Month'.

'Get Involved Month' saw various activities taking place across college including Work Experience Week, National Baking Week and volunteer visits.

We were lucky to have teams of volunteers visit us at the main campus, and at Umberslade, for various projects. Two teams from Barclays Wealth visited us, with one group painting the 'soon to be' tea room at Umberslade and the second group decorating areas of our Mary Badger and Ashwood houses. Teams from DWP and Co-Operative Energy also joined in at Umberslade, gardening, painting and helping to host our Halloween Pumpkin Day.

We hosted another Team Building Development Day with representatives from Hilton Garden Inn, Tyndallwoods, Amey, Barclays Wealth and Guide Dogs joining QAC staff to take part in various disability focused challenges. This was the third event of its kind with participants commenting on how thought provoking and enjoyable it was. We will use feedback from all sessions to design team building days we can offer to other organisations, in early 2015.

We really appreciate the support we get from our Corporate and Community supporters and value the time, energy and effort they put in to working with us. If you and/or your organisation would like to get involved then please contact Sarah:
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 visual impairment and for people experiencing age related sight problems.

2015 Dates

**Edinburgh
21st April**

**Glasgow
22nd April**

**Birmingham
14/15th July**

**Manchester
29th September**

**London
3/4th November**

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

autism central

**Autism Central returns on
13th 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



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

The enterprises raise invaluable funds for the College, promote good practice in disability employment and enable us to enhance the student experience. Many of the enterprises enable students to complete work placements in real-life establishments whilst at the same time feeling secure in their surroundings.

Our portfolio of businesses is varied with lots to offer. If you would like to know more about them please contact the team directly or contact: sadderley@qac.ac.uk



All Formats Transcriptions 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



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



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



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



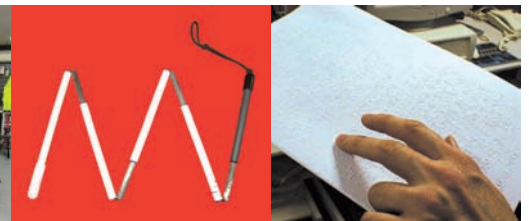
Located in Selly Oak, Umberslade Nurseries is a rural idyll in an urban setting comprising of a small retail outlet & various horticultural facilities for hire.

Contact us on 0121 472 4894

Conference & Training Facilities available for hire

We have excellent conference and training facilities available to hire.

Contact us on 0121 428 5041



● 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.



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