What’s Next for Queensborough Graduates?

By Stephanie Sharkey

Many Queensborough Community College (QCC) students are closing one chapter of their college career and beginning the next. There are also the few that may not be continuing with college but are still continuing on with their future.

In anticipation of our upcoming commencement and in celebration of all the QCC graduates, the Communique profiled four graduating students, who agreed to tell their story as to what they have planned and what has contributed to their decisions.

Brian Healy, an upcoming QCC graduate wants to continue his Business degree to one day becoming a part of the business world. When fall comes, he will join the students at Queens College, one step closer to his future. He wants to eventually open his own business, maybe a grocery store and expand from there.

“I went to the public library for the first time in like maybe ten years and rented two books, one on how to succeed in the business world and the other on self-discipline,” said Healy. “When I talk to my family about my goals and plans they don’t take me seriously, but this is something I really want, which is why I got the books—to be more knowledgeable and as informed as possible.”

Melissa Allison is less certain of her path. As a QCC graduate who will be attending John Jay in the fall, she is on the fence about whether she wants to pursue Criminal Justice as a major or not.

“I know picking a major isn’t set in stone and I can always change,” she reflects, “but the idea of starting something and then having to change feels like I would be wasting time. It’s a really big decision for me to make.”

Many students out there feel the same way. Some choose careers because of the paycheck they’ll receive and some because they have a passion for what they do.

One student who is choosing passion over paycheck is Gabriella Derdiarian, another soon-to-be QCC graduate.

“I picked Childhood Education to major in because I love kids and teaching. I want to contribute to the education and future of young children. I’ve heard a lot of people say that it’s hard for upcoming teachers to get a job or that the pay isn’t all that great. However, I feel, if I wanted a career where I make money, I would have chosen something like a doctor.”

Danielle Sinclair, who also plans to graduate this spring, isn’t continuing school in the fall, but has accepted the position as a teller at a Chase bank. She plans to work while taking a breather and recollecting herself without the stress of school, coursework, deadlines, and grades hounding her.

“One of the factors that contributed to my decision to not continue to another school in the fall is because I need a break,” said Sinclair. “School is becoming really stressful and sometimes it feels

Governor Cuomo Testing Our Education Majors Out Of Education

By Kevin Leong

The new school reform proposals by Governor Andrew Cuomo have passed, along with nearly a 5 percent increase in funding for New York State schools.

However, the reactions of parents, teachers and education majors are mixed at best at the reforms to come.

Teachers that work for the Board of Education are evaluated every year by principals on their effectiveness. They can be rated ineffective, developing, effective or super-effective. Cuomo wants to add an outside evaluator to the equation.

The plan includes reforms on the way teachers are evaluated and eventually tenured. The current evaluation system requires teachers to be evaluated a minimum of four times a year. The evaluation system may cut that down to twice a year.

Scientific research teaches that a sample size is important to get effective results. The more evaluations, the better idea of the effectiveness of a teacher. Ultimately, this reduction in evaluations affects teachers’ job security, creating the stronger possibility of being fired if standards aren’t met.

Teachers’ effectiveness is tied to how well students perform during the visit. “If the students are having a sluggish day or misbehaving in that particular moment it can affect the evaluations negatively,” noted Kristina Tsang, a first year special education teacher.

Exploring Internships for College Students

By Sajida Sakhi

As the economy increasingly becomes global, the competition for good jobs also continues to increase. As we all know, going to college is a critical step, but we can enhance classroom learning by gaining real world experience through internships that are offered by institutions, such as Queensborough Community College.

According to CNN news, “Graduating students with paid or unpaid internships on their resume have a much better chance at landing a full-time position upon graduation.”

Internships are essential and a great way for a student to invest time.

The Office of Career Services willingly provides students with the support they may need in pursuing their desired career. One way that they assist their students in their career goals is by providing internships.

Be aware that the Office of Career Services will be sending you a notice in your weekly TigerMail newsletter alerting you to new internship opportunities that become available. The Office of Career Services urges students to take advantages of their continued on page 2
**Campus News**

**Exploring Internships for College Students**

Continued from cover page

Students should be aware that there is a big handbook out there that has the title, “How to Pay for College” to make things any easier. When college students find ways that help us grow individually, we have the obligation to share that knowledge with our fellow classmates.

Harry Harrison’s book of suggestions entitled 1001 Things Every College Student Needs to Know can serve as one handbook for incoming and current college students. The book addresses anything and everything you can think of about college. Topics range from how to take a multiple-choice test without choosing “B” every time to successfully managing a relationship in college to alcohol consumption. Harrison also addresses topics that have to do with classroom success, like how to take an exam without freezing up and how to still thrive even though you hate working in groups.

“Any extra credit when you’re not required to be in school should be taken advantage of,” Harrison states in his book.

Anytime one isn’t required to be taking classes or doing anything towards getting your degree is ample time to be actually working towards your goal. So no matter how much of an annoyance it is to use a few weeks of your summer vacation to take a few credits, go through with it because in the long haul, it will pay off. The benefits of boosting your GPA, taking smaller class sizes with fewer people and expediting the process of getting a degree are only a few of the most obvious that prove that taking summer classes and finding ways to pay for them works in the student’s favor.

Entrepreneurs, Christopher Gray, Nick Pirolo and Bryson Acle are behind creating arguably the easiest way to find scholarships with today’s advanced technology. The app they created goes by the name Scholly, and it has taken the college community by storm all across the country.

Gray was raised in Birmingham by a single mom with his two siblings. Money was so tight for him and his family growing up that despite his high GPA and solid test scores, he still wasn’t able to afford to apply to every school he wanted to for college due to prices for sending applications. He was relentless and continued to dig until it paid off. Gray received a staggering $1.3 million in scholarships, including a full ride from the Continued on page 12
Advise Is Way to Go!

By Enoe Garcia

One of the most stressful times of the semester for students is probably re-registration. Many students attending Queensborough Community College (QCC) have had a moment of doubt, concern, or even confusion as of how to go about the process on CunyFirst and what classes they should be taking. Most students assume they just need 60 credits in order to graduate, but that is wrong. As a student, getting your Associate’s degree at QCC, you need to take 60 credits worth of classes that meet the particular requirements on your audit, depending on your major, to graduate.

Students do not always seek the help they need for several reasons, for example, they do not know where to go or who to ask.

Some students complete the process of registration on their own, but is it really best that way? Getting a little feedback on where you are academically is not going to hurt, but instead will benefit you.

One QCC student, Jarissa Sanchez, said, “I find the process of re-registering very difficult because I’m taking an English 200 when I really need to be taking another history course, but I did not go looking for advisement, so it is my fault [that] I just wasted my time.”

Many students go through, what Sanchez went through, mostly because they do not seek help to understand what courses they need to be taking.

Another student, Lisa Gonzalez said, “I thought I was going to graduate next semester and I did not know that I was missing two PE courses that I had no clue I needed to take. Thankfully I made an appointment with an adviser and she helped me so much that I am graduating this semester!”

Gonzalez seemed very happy to be receiving her associate degree this spring, thanks to her advisor who gave her required classes attention.

As students, we must take the time to make an appointment with an adviser and follow up with them every semester. Here are a few places and information as of where to go for advisement and what you will retrieve from it.

Where to go on campus to receive academic advisement:

There are several different places to get advisement:

LIBRARY: On the fourth floor in Room 434, you’ll find advisers for liberal arts majors. You can make an appointment with any advisor that is available. They are very flexible with your schedule, so making an appointment should not be too hard. The advisors review your audit with you and process the information you need onto your CunyFirst account. They can even help you with enrolling online and answer any of your concerns.

REGISTRAR’S OFFICE: Located in the admissions building, the staff who work in this office help you by explaining your degree audit and what classes you’ll need to take to graduate.

Now, there are also special programs offered on campus that provide advising:

COLLEGE DISCOVERY and ASAP. These programs have several benefits, but you must see if you are eligible to apply first. These programs will provide you with your own personal adviser and help you every step of the way. They also offer help with taking summer and/or winter classes, and paying for textbooks, and transportation to and from QCC.

Now that you have your classes, what should you do next?

Now you can finally arrange your schedule, based on you the classes you are going to enroll in. First, log onto your CunyFirst account. Once you are logged in, click on student self-service, and underneath your schedule you will go onto your enrollment shopping cart. This is where you pick the term you are enrolling in, whether summer 2015 or fall 2016. Then click search and find the classes you are required to take. After you have the list of times and days the classes meet, wait for the actual day of enrollment and register for your classes completely.

Spotlight on the SODA Club

By Michelle Vohra

Being different from others in a college setting can be challenging and uncomfortable, but one place at Queensborough Community College (QCC) where you can always be comfortable is in the Students Organization of Disability Awareness (SODA) club. People are always seeking a place of inclusion and the idea of a safe space. This club emphasizes just that.

According to DisabilityStatistics.org, an estimated 12.1 percent of non-institutionalized, males and females of all ages and education levels in the United States reported a disability in 2012. In other words, 37,627,800 people in the United States reported a disability.

One purpose of the SODA club is to promote awareness of issues around disabilities in our society. The club meets on Wednesdays in room 142 in the Medical Arts building.

“My younger brother has a disability and when we go outside kids always point and laugh at him, and there’s been times where even adults say things out loud that can hurt his feelings,” Naresh Persaud, a first year student, explained.

“I don’t blame them for the way they act because some people just don’t know any better or were not informed about people with disabilities. Spreading awareness can help them understand his problem and hopefully they can realize their actions.”

The website Tolerance.org explains the uncomfortable situations and questions that may occur. Naturally, many people, especially young people, tend to avoid those who make us feel uncomfortable or guilty.

“Not knowing how to act or respond to someone very different can be scary, especially for a young person,” the website explains. “What if he can’t shake hands? Should I pat him on the shoulder? Maybe she walks unsteadily. Will she fall? Will I hurt her if I try to help? What if I say the wrong thing?”

The club finds it extremely important to spread the awareness to as many people as they can so other people do not have to go through being made fun of for something they cannot help. Being disabled is not a choice; it is a struggle, especially in a society where it is very hard to fit in.

In the club, students discuss problems with schoolwork including barriers and challenges that they face in school due to their disability. They also talk about their recent experiences or other problems they are dealing with outside of school. After addressing the problems, they try to propose solutions and give advice on how to overcome the issues along with giving the emotional support they may need.

Roberto Zamora, a student at QCC, has been a member since Fall 2013 semester and has become vice president in the Spring 2014. In Fall 2015, he will be looking forward to becoming the official president of the club after the current president, Matthew Feinman, graduates.

On March 21, the SODA club held a bake sale to also help raise money for scholarships for students with disabilities. Bake sales are held numerous times every semester. “Some challenges we face during our bake sales are that, where they are doing the constructions, that was the spot we always had before and it’s hard to set up and find other spots where the most students pass by,” Zamora says. “Also, during the winter, the bad weather really gets in the way for us to hold anything outside.”

One of the biggest projects is called the Walk to Aspire which was held on Wednesday April 21st. It was to raise money for scholarships for students with and without disabilities. Approximately one thousand dollars was raised within this semester. CUNY Collation of Students with Disabilities (CCSD) students are encouraged to get involved with civic engagements, spread awareness, and participate in events. The CCSD organizes donations and there are often raffles where students can win prizes such as tickets to a hockey or basketball game.

“I was at the bake sale they were holding,” Katherine Ortiz said. “I feel so happy that they are raising money for these students so that they also have the experience of getting scholarships. I feel good about myself and that the club does so much for these students. It makes me feel good about the campus.”

Guest speakers and motivational speakers visit QCC. Agencies like SIDNY offer services, accommodations, and health care for people with disabilities. The CUNY Leads program’s goal is to provide equal opportunities in employment for the disabled. On April 28th there will be a guest speaker at the Student Union building upper level continued on page 7
Campus News

“Oh No, Not Another Expense”—The Rising Cost Of College Textbooks

By LaToya Warren-Arrington

The cost of living in New York City today for the average person is almost three thousand dollars a month. These costs come directly from rent or mortgage payments, food, transportation, utilities, phone bills, and other miscellaneous expenses. Keep in mind, that doesn’t include any costs associated with having children, which of course means additional expenses.

Although colleges are filled up with young people straight out of high school, along with a few that took a year off to figure out their lives, 40 percent of college students range from the ages of 30 to 55. In that age bracket, folks usually aren’t living at home on their parents’ expenses. These are students that made a decision to come back to school and receive their education while working and raising their families.

With the average cost of living being so overwhelmingly high, another expense can either make or break students. College textbook prices are rising higher than ever before. Students spend over $1200 yearly on college textbooks and that price is rising according to the advocacy group U.S. PIRG.

“My first semester attending college I failed my English class because I couldn’t afford to buy the book, which caused me to miss assignments,” says Jeremy Chan, a sophomore attending Queensboro College in Flushing. “I applied for financial assistance too late. Once I spoke to my college advisor, she put me back on the right path, but it was a waste of time to because I know if I had the textbook I would have passed the class.”

“I must admit that the textbooks are really expensive, especially in my case when I attend school full time and work part time,” Annabelle Torres, a 24-year old Queensboro student who is about to graduate, noted. “Thank god I had professors that understood my situation and helped me pair up with students that they knew were reliable for us to share books, which worked great for me my first semester here.”

Although these are tough times for many, there is no doubt that students have found creative ways to save a dollar or two in purchasing textbooks.

“I go on Amazon and rent whatever continued on page 11

Why Take Summer Classes?

By Aliecia Bobb

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“I go on Amazon and rent whatever continued on page 11

Financial Aid: Am I Approved?

By Wanderley Gomez

For many students it is difficult to transition from high school to college. Many times, these students don’t have the financial flexibility to pay their tuition. The students’ fees can range from $2,000 to $2,500 per semester at Queensborough Community College (QCC).

However, the federal government created a program designed to help those students who aren’t able to pay their tuition.

According to the Queensborough Community College website, “The Office of Financial Services is committed to helping students complete the financial aid process and get the money they need to attend college. We provide information and counseling to all students regarding the various financial aid programs.”

Students who applied for financial aid are required to have at least a 2.0 GPA in order to be eligible for assistance. Classes can’t be dropped, due to the fact the students can go from a full-time to a part-time schedule. Students who are full-time students are eligible for financial aid, which means they have to have at least 12 credits within a semester. They are allowed to enroll in remedial classes and it will not count as attempted credits.

“Last semester the financial aid office didn’t approve my application when the semester was about to start,” said Sergio Garcia, a student at QCC. “Due to my application not being approved at last minute I had to pay of my pocket till the application was approved.”

Many students face the same issues every year due to miscommunication between the financial aid office and students. Students have to pay out of their pocket while the financial aid office declares their eligibility for the aid.

“I lost two weeks of class because my application wasn’t approved on time and I didn’t know whether attend to class or not,” said Kevin Vardez, another QCC student. When students miss too many classes, the class grade can drop, which causes their GPA to lower and financial aid availability can change.

“The Financial aid office helped me fill out my application for student aid,” said Naomi Perez a student at QCC. “As a freshman, the financial aid office told me what were the steps to take and what materials would I need in order to complete my application.”

The financial aid office provides help for students who are willing to come to the office and take some time to fill out their application. They will guide you step by step making sure the application is fill the correct way.
They’re Back!

BY Joyce Han

For those that have never heard of a smorgasbord, the Brooklyn Smorgasbord is not just any food flea market. It’s the Brooklyn weekly food flea market. On most weekends, there are 75 to 100 different food vendors. This gives customers a variety of different foods to try. For some people, it may seem a bit “pricey,” but at the end of the day, they will all agree that it was well worth the price.

This year, Smorgasberg was open on the first weekend of April and will be open through November. This food market is only open on the weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. Their locations differ depending on the day. On Saturdays, it is open at the East River State Park—Kent Ave and N. 7 St. on the Williamsburg waterfront. On Sundays, it is open at the Brooklyn Bridge Park’s Pier 5.

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Out Of Education

Governor Cuomo Testing Our Education Majors Out Of Education

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However, the most controversial part of the new evaluation system would be the increase in standardized tests in the teacher’s evaluation. Standardized tests have been controversial for a number of years. The new reforms will increase the scores to account for 50% of the evaluated, up from the 20 percent.

A teacher like Tsang will be evaluated in the same way as all the other teachers, despite special education teachers having to teach students with behavioral issues and learning disabilities. Her students will also be given the same standardized test with additional time.

Queensborough Community College’s (QCC) doesn’t have an education major but it does have a program for students interested in completing a Bachelor’s in Education.

Renee Rhodd, an Academic Advisor for Education at QCC had some insight on standardized tests.

“I understand why [standardized tests are needed but it is] not a true predictor of success,”’ she said. Rhodd explained that from the perspective of a parent, “that’s a high score to have on the teachers because they can only do so much to prepare a student for an exam.”

“There could be some good test takers,” Rhodd elaborated. “They could do a very good job preparing the children and they get into the exam and not do well in the exam for whatever reason. Fifty percent is on the teachers and they aren’t in the class to take the test with them.”

Governor Cuomo believes that there needs to be more accountability in the low scores for standardized tests and the stakes have to be higher. However, in a 2011 report to Congress, the National Academy of Sciences reviewed America’s test-based accountability systems and concluded, “There are little to no positive effects of these systems overall on student learning and educational progress.”

The exams themselves are controversial because of the ambiguous and poorly written questions and answers. Five hundred and forty-five New York State principals noted in a statement that teachers and principals themselves could not agree on the correct answers for the tests.

Many teachers, parents and education-intended majors also oppose standardized tests being tied so closely to teachers.

“You don’t know what a child is going through at home,” noted Katrina Edwards, a QCC student who intends to complete a degree in education. “You don’t know how the parents are, so you can’t really evaluate a teacher’s ability based on a standardized test.”

Renate Smith, President of the Future Teachers Society at QCC, agrees.

“I don’t think that it is a good idea. I can’t see how students benefit from that. I don’t believe that standardized tests truly reflect what a child is learning.”

Standardized tests tend to stand in opposition to what students are taught about in Education classes.

“I’ve had a lot of students complete the degree and [teaching] is not what they envisioned it to be,” Rhodd explains. “It’s more paperwork and they can’t be creative in the class because they have to meet these state requirements or [ones imposed by the] Board of Ed. They are so wrapped up with the bureaucracy versus what they actually went to school for.”

Rhodd advised, “I think [it’s important] just to be even clearer to them that they have to be more empowered and know what’s out there. Read the newspapers, network with teachers.”

Colleges, in other words, aren’t properly preparing students for how the system will really work, only what works in theory.

“You have to change the way instruction is being administered in college now,” said Rhodd. “It’s ultimately going to trickle down to the way we prepare being better teachers.”

Teaching is a passionate profession and these reforms are testing education majors’ conviction. Edwards maybe changing her choice in profession.

“I always wanted to be a teacher, but the fact is that there is so much change,” Edwards explains. “I love kids, but to be a teacher is a lot to deal with. The state doesn’t make it easier, so it would be my second career choice.”

In contrast, Smith hasn’t wavered.

“It just means that my job is going to be more difficult than I initially expected, but I love this field and I’m always hoping for the best.”

“I don’t believe any field has 100% job security. I will just have to do my absolute best and hope that it is enough.”
In the Public Eye

By Daniel Kwon

The calls for body cameras on police officers country-wide have reached a fever pitch on the heels of several high-profile deaths, including 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and more recently, the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore.

The 25-year-old Gray died on April 19 from spinal cord injuries that he sustained while in police custody. Gray’s death sparked violent protests in Baltimore, causing Maryland governor Larry Hogan to declare a state of emergency, impose a 10 p.m. curfew and deploy over 2,000 National Guard troops in front of Baltimore City Hall on the morning of April 28.

President Barack Obama has since denounced the protests, describing them as “senseless violence and destruction,” and Gray’s mother has also made a plea for peace at Gray’s funeral calling the violence and rioting “wrong.” Protests have only just begun to pick up steam in Washington D.C. and Manhattan, with over a dozen arrests already made in Manhattan’s Union Square. The injuries that led to Gray’s death happened under mysterious circumstances.

Gray was arrested and by the time he was brought to the precinct 30 minutes later, he had three fractured vertebrae from which he later died. There is no video evidence on what culminated inside the police van leading to Gray’s injuries and police are denying any use of force. The implementation of body cameras are meant to shed light on cases like Gray’s, and there is no doubt that video evidence would have brought out the truth.

The idea of body cameras on police officers has not been without controversy. Proponents of the body cameras say that the cameras provide greater transparency of police interaction with the public. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was quoted as saying that the cameras “will improve transparency and accountability,” and that “it will help protect good people on both sides of the lens.” The body cameras can be used to hold police accountable for their actions but also protect cops who are falsely accused of wrongdoing.

There are, however, privacy concerns with the use of body cameras as well as other logistical issues. Detractors of the body cameras argue that these cameras violate privacy rights and can record civilians in their most vulnerable moments. In addition, victims may not report crimes while being recorded for fear of retaliation and the cameras may cause confidential informants to become anxious and uncooperative.

There is also the issue of and where to store the enormous amount of data and whether or not the cameras should be left on at all times, or only before an interaction with the public due to camera battery life and storage costs. The cameras cost from about $200 to $1000. The Los Angeles Police Department will incur an initial expense of $1.5 million for equipment, maintenance and storage for 860 cameras according to reuters.com. This figure did not factor in the cost of staff to manage the data. There were signs of help from the federal government in December of 2014 when President Barack Obama announced he will be starting a $75 million initiative for the purchase of 50,000 body cameras, but Congress has remained inactive and the funding has since been stalled.

More than half of the country’s largest police departments, including New York, Chicago and Washington D.C., have already begun pilot programs to evaluate the value of outfitting police with cameras.

What’s Next for Queensborough Graduates?

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Like I’m playing catch-up. The only thing keeping me going is the fact I know there are only a few weeks left in the semester and graduation is right there. I feel like I’m at ‘the end of my rope,’ as the saying goes.

I have been going to school non-stop since I can remember without any breaks and it’s catching up to me. I need to regroup and then I will continue.”

Sinclair thinks taking a break from school and focusing on work will help her when she does decide to go back to school, because she feels it will be refreshing.

Whether our graduating students are continuing their education, taking a break, or moving into the workforce, they should be congratulated for all they have achieved. They are an inspiration to the rest of us who look forward to our own graduation day!

Credit Scores No Longer a Criteria for Future Employers

By Brendan McCormick

The Council of New York City came to a overwhelming one-sided decision to ban employers from utilizing a person’s credit score to discriminate against candidates who are applying for a job. This is a win for many civil rights groups that have been protesting against a business having the right to penalize those with weak or nonexistent credit histories.

One of Queensborough student advocacy groups, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), has been grueling protest, calling senators in New York, and raising awareness amongst people of the city. One of the main reasons as to why NYPIRG took such a large interest in this social issue is that it hinders students and those struggling economically from getting certain jobs.

Many students have to take out loans in order to pay for school and this may leave a blemish on their credit history, especially if they still owe this money during the interview process. The debt that students incur becomes a burden the minute they decide to take out a loan in order to continue their education. This makes it very difficult to get a job when credit scores are a factor in job screening.

These protests are ongoing and in 2012, students interning for NYPIRG joined other colleges across the city to protest the ban on credit checks during job screenings.

“Hundreds and thousands of New Yorkers face discrimination, face being denied, a job, or a promotion, because of their credit histories, and it’s not right,” said City Councilman of Brooklyn, Brad Lander.

Before the ban, this paradoxical bill allowed employers to perpetuate the cyclical attitude toward the impoverished. An employer was able to group all of its prospective employees into massive data screenings, which rated future and current employee’s credit history. Those who had recently lost a house, had unpaid medical bills, just gotten divorced or had one too many children were being discriminated against because of their credit history. Employers saw their low credit scores and unpaid bills as an indicator of how trustworthy they’d be as employees. This nonsensical correlation was one that kept many hardworking, desperate people out of work for years.

“Companies like Experian, TransUnion and Equifax continue to market and sell this product to businesses despite that their own representatives having acknowledged that there is absolutely no link between credit history and job performance,” said Andy Morrison of NYPIRG.

This ban is not as heavy-handed as it may seem. There are compromises to this bill being passed. The compromises of this ban preserves the right of some employers, including many executive positions, any position where a person would be trusted to oversee financial agreements that deal with large sums of money over $10,000, law enforcement and jobs involving security will remain subject to these credit history checks.

If nothing else, this is a step in the right direction. Many people who were being discriminated against for a lacking or nonexistent credit history are now able to apply for jobs without this cloud hovering above their head. They’re also able to finally flourish in their jobs and hopefully increase the well-being of their credit scores, so that one day, they won’t have to worry about being in debt.
Sakura Matsuri: The Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival

By Fateha Begum

On April 25th, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden held its 34th annual “Sakura Matsuri,” also known as the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival, where it brings the experience of Japan right here to the U.S. New Yorkers are able to get a glimpse of Japanese tradition and culture. Admission fees are $25 for adults, $20 for seniors, $20 for students who are twelve and above with valid ID, while children under 12 are free. This festival continued the very next day ending at 6:00 PM. Attendees get a wonderful opportunity to explore all the different activities and events throughout the entire day.

Different landmarks of Brooklyn Botanic Garden, like the main stage at Cherry Esplanade, held various events such as the “Soh Daiko,” where drummers on stage played traditional Japanese music. Other performances like the “Kabuki Buyo” - a dance where female performers wear kimonos - colorful traditional Japanese attire - and the “BBQ Parasol Society Fashion Show” also took place.

The main stage at Osborne Garden hosted the “Hanaagasa Odori” parade - a flower hat dance with the Japanese Folk Dance Institute of New York. Besides the main stage, rows of white tents could be found almost everywhere; from workshops in manga drawing, to book signings, to purchases of vintage Japanese kimonos, Japanese art, to modern day cosplay accessories, gardening, traditional Japanese footwear, wall scrolls, and various options of tea. Shops like Minamoto Kitchoan and Royce Chocolate had chocolate, and maccha tea bags to take home. Origami lessons were also held as there was a Samurai Origami Workshop where Jeremy Aaron Horland teaches participants how to make a paper helmet.

The festival was especially kid friendly, providing inflatable rubber duck seats where they had a chance to sketch their favorite Sakura sightings, so it could be added to an expanding art collection. There were cutouts where children could go from posing as a warrior to a daikon radish or even food being carried by chopsticks. Kids had a chance to design and make their very own tea bags to take home. Origami lessons were also held as there was a Samurai Origami Workshop where Jeremy Aaron Horland teaches participants how to make a paper helmet.

While the Sakura Matsuri offered all this and much more, the tradition of “hanami,” or flower viewing, was just as pleasing. The cherry blossoms were definitely a sight to behold. Whichever landmark visited, cherry trees could be found at either almost every corner or right across a huge lake. Cosplayers - people who wear costumes to represent their favorite characters from manga and animes - posed for photos behind the beautiful cherry blossoms. However, we may view these trees simply as blossoms and admire their beauty, but to Japan these trees are much more significant. When the cherry blossom trees first bloom large groups of people come with their families and friends to view these flowers together whether it be to enjoy a festival with food, drink, and music, or to simply be together with their loved ones and have a picnic in the shade of these trees.

According to Chef Homaro Cantu, in an article he wrote for the Huffington Post, “The significance of the cherry blossom tree in Japanese culture goes back hundreds of years. In their country, the cherry blossom represents the fragility and the beauty of life. It’s a reminder that life is almost overwhelmingly beautiful but that it is also tragically short. When the cherry blossom trees bloom for a short time each year in brilliant force, they serve as a visual reminder of how precious and how precarious life is. So, when Japanese people come together to view the cherry blossom trees and marvel at their beauty, they aren’t just thinking about the flowers themselves, but also about the larger meaning and deep cultural tradition the cherry blossom tree.”

Spotlight on the SODA Club

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from 2pm to 4pm.

“In my Health class last semester, I used to sit next to a student with a disability,” said Shadie Harrison. “I could tell he felt different and he was really shy, but I felt like it was my duty to help him out and be his friend. He was really cool, and he actually taught me things about other states and places that he went on trips to that I had no idea about. I feel like its important to engage with other students because you never know, you may learn some interesting things from them as I did.”

Zamora, the club Vice President said, “I love to open the doors for others and set them in the correct direction. We want to make them feel equal to everyone else job wise, school, and overall in society. Most of all, the college experience, giving them a taste of what college is like in an enjoyable way. No one is left out.”

During club hours, students can do activities such as games, cards, and improvisational games. It’s not always just talking about concerns but having fun too. Once a month, there is a vote for what movie students want to see in the clubroom. Anyone, even non-club members are welcome to enjoy a movie day and play games. The goal is to embrace each other and feel more together. It’s all about positive vibes and having a good time.

“By being in the club you are not only helping others but the benefit of it is you get to be a big part of QCC— and it looks really good on resumes.”

Some upcoming summer events include the 25th anniversary of the Accessible Disability Act (ADA) and also the Disability Pride Parade on July 12th. There will also be an ADA barbeque at Queens College, but the date is TBA.

The SODA club welcomes all students to join and be a part of the organization. It is a friendly, no judgment zone, where students can be absolutely no discriminating against anyone, and it’s a great place to find friends and feel safe.
What Happened to German Wings, Flight 9525?

By Joanna Manoloudas

On March 24, 2015 a flight from Barcelona-El Prat Airport in Spain took off towards Dusseldorf Airport in Germany. The airline was operated by GermanWings; a low-cost airline owned by Lufthansa.

This aircraft recorded no accidents involving passenger deaths until it crashed 100 kilometers northwest of Nice, in the French Alps. All 144 passengers and six crew members were killed in the crash. Around 30 minutes into the flight, the plane had reached a cruising altitude of 38,000 feet when it began to quickly lower at a rate of 3,000 feet per minute. Initially thought to be a tragic accident, investigators now suspect the crash was a “deliberate” act by the co-pilot.

According to CNN news, this crash was intentionally caused by the co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz. Having previously been treated for suicidal tendencies and having been declared, “unfit to work,” by a doctor, Lubitz kept this information from his employer and reported for duty. During the flight, he locked the captain out of the cockpit before initiating a drop that caused the plane to crash into a mountain. Back at the airport, airline officials track all flights and have recordings in the cockpits. The co-pilot, Lubitz, can be heard breathing on the recording but did nothing to open the door. Screams were also reportedly heard on the recording just moments before the impact.

“I cannot imagine that he would have done something like that, I cannot believe it,” said an anonymous friend of Lubitz. “He was simply a normal person, with no signs of any problem,” the friend told NBC News.

Investigators have said that they believe the crash to be “deliberate,” but have avoided calling an act that killed 149 others a suicide. Also among the dead were 16 German high school students, a newlywed couple, and a few opera singers. “None of the passengers were in terrorist organizations; death was instantaneous for the passengers aboard,” said Marseilles prosecutor Brice Robin, who has played a key role in this investigation.

Some questions we ask ourselves are, “What caused Lubitz’s to make the decision of steering the plane down into the mountains?” “What health problems was Lubitz suffering from, and did these health issues play a role in the crash?”

It is still unclear whether the pilot locked outside the cockpit entered a code to get back in or whether Lubitz manually prevented him from entering. FBI investigators have joined the investigation of the crash, alongside German, French and Spanish officials. In America it is protocol that a flight attendant goes into the cockpit when one pilot leaves but they do not have this rule officially for European Airlines. German officials announced that a new task force would look at issues including medical procedures for pilots and cockpit door locking mechanisms after this devastating crash.

This tragic accident leaves many families and loved ones heartbroken. They must live with the fact that they will never see those passengers on that plane ever again. No one will ever truly know what caused Andreas Lubitz to crash the airplane. A law enforcement official who had a lead on the investigation, told CNN news that authorities believe the primary motive for Lubitz to bring down the plane was that he feared he would not be allowed to fly in the future because of his medical problems. Many workers continue with the task of searching for the remains of those killed in the March 24 crash. A simple memorial has been set up at Le Vernet in France, where families grieve for those killed in this tragic crash.

The Race to the 2016 Presidential Elections

“The Race to the 2016 Presidential Elections” - Photo credit: Donkey Hotey

By Jalexus Apollon & Michael Wong

The 2016 United States presidential election is rapidly approaching. With President Barack Obama’s second and final term coming to an end, the race is on to find the next President.

Former First Lady and Democratic New York Senator Hillary Clinton, 67, officially announced on April 12 that she would be running in this upcoming presidential election. Her last run was in the 2008 primaries, where she eventually lost to Obama. This time around, she has a strong group of supporters, and is considered the Democratic front runner.

Clinton’s main approach has been to campaign to improve the economic fortunes of the middle class by increasing the minimum wage and reducing income inequality. Her image as a grandmother has been used not only to suggest experience, but to signal a desire to better the country for her own grandchildren as part of the next generation of Americans to come.

“I think it’s great that she’s trying for a second term,” said Shawn, a current Queensborough Community College student. “I think she could actually win this and do a good job running the Country.”

Despite all the hype of possibly being the first female President, some express uncertainty in her ability to be elected, since she is a woman. Though Clinton has a large backing of supporters that want her to win, some are not so sure that the rest of the nation is ready for a female president.

“I am a female myself, I would love to see her win but I don’t think it’s going to happen,” said Mati, a 20-year-old student at QCC. “We’ve had our first African American President for almost eight years. There’s no way the Republicans are going to allow us our first women resident following Obama.”

Clinton is aware of the naysayers, but chooses to focus on the positive.

“Everyday Americans need a champion. And I want to be that champion,” Clinton said in a video declaring she would run for office, which was released on her website, HillaryClinton.com.

Republican Senator Ted Cruz from Texas, 44, was the first candidate to officially declare his candidacy in the 2016 presidential elections. As a Republican, Cruz wants to attract other conservatives to support him. He is also trying to appeal to the conservative voters that didn’t vote in the last presidential election.

The main theme in his campaign is not only running as the most conservative candidate, but also the boldest, mainly by vocally opposing many policies Obama enacted during his presidency. One of Cruz’s main goals is to change the Affordable Care Act, which has come to be known as Obamacare.

Republican Senator of Kentucky Rand Paul, 52, brings a different view compared to the other Republican candidates. When it comes to foreign policy, for instance, he is in favor of negotiating with Tehran to try to reach an agreement about nuclear weapons, as opposed to imposing sanctions or military strikes.

Senator Paul is also in favor of immigration reform. When attending a group of supportive Republican legislators, he stated, “I am in favor of doing immigration
The Race to the 2016 Presidential Elections

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reform, but it should be done in a proper fashion.” He continued, “the 11 million, I think, are never going home, don’t need to be sent home, and I would incorporate them into our society by giving them work visas and making them taxpayers.”

Paul has stated during an interview with Fox News anchor Bret Baier, that he is opposed to same-sex marriage and the thought of it “offends me and a lot of people.” However, he would leave the issue up to the states to handle.

Of Paul’s position on gay marriage Mati says, “I don’t like it. I don’t get how two people of the same sex being married affects him on a day to day basis.”

Like Cruz, the Kentucky senator opposes Obamacare. On his official website Paul.senate.gov, he explained his vision on how to fix health care.

“I have long supported making all medical expenses tax deductible, - empowering all citizens to save for health expenses by removing the high deductible insurance policy.”

Paul is the only candidate to run for the 2016 election who is a licensed doctor.

The final Republican candidate to declare is Marco Rubio, 43, a Florida senator. Rubio has been an underdog since he was a state legislator campaigning to gain Florida’s open Senate seat back in 2009. Six years later, he is shocking people again by setting his sites on the White House.

As a child of Cuban immigrant parents, Rubio opposed President Obama’s 2014 executive actions on immigration. However, has more recently stated that he believes in “a path to citizenship” for illegal immigrants. He thinks the best way to solve the immigration issue is not to deport the current illegal immigrants, but to first enhance border security.

“I’m Cuban-American and I have friends who have family members that are here illegally,” says Wendy, a 22-year old QCC student. “I definitely don’t think deporting illegal immigrants and destroying families is the way to fix the issue. Him coming from a Cuban household, I’m sure he understands that compared to the others [candidates].”

Senator Rubio also believes in a tough approach when handling foreign policy.

According to the New York Times, “On the Middle East, Mr. Rubio has suggested that military action might be necessary to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.”

Mr. Rubio also opposed the Obama administration’s outreach to Cuba.

As of now, the Independent political party has yet to confirm a candidate.

Some voters do not exercise their rights for a number of reasons, whether it be because they do not know how, they feel as if their opinion and their vote will not make a difference, or they are just not interested in politics.

“I’m not registered to vote and I don’t have a political party,” says a current QCC student, Mathew, 20. “I don’t feel like my vote really makes a difference.”

According to americanprogress.org, “34 percent of nonvoters are younger than 30 years old and the vast majority—70 percent—are younger than 50 years old.”

Getting to know more about each candidate and their views about important matters is crucial in making an educated decision on who is best qualified to run the country.

Technology

Beyond 20/20 Vision

By Anthony Inzerelli

smart phone built into them. They have the basic glasses look with a mini chip on the front lens of the glass. On the side of the glass there is a touch pad where you can scroll through the home screen of the glasses. Across your eyes you are able to see the weather forecast, your phone call history, directions to a location, and view pictures in your photo album. You will also be able to take pictures as you are going about your day. You can now have the ability to stop for a split second and photograph anything your eyes can see.

Voice command is also going to be a big factor in the glasses. You are going to be able to give full commands to the glasses. The glasses are being made to make your hands free, life easier, and have easy access to your phone without reaching into your pocket. You will be able to activate the glasses by looking up just saying two words “OK Google.”

There have been many well documented reviews that give this product a promising future. However, people have also complained about a couple of the flaws. One being, a person that wears normal glasses will have to get prescription lenses so they will be able to see both in front of them and the actual screen that is coming across their eyes. The other flaw is that the little screen and battery on the one side of the glasses, it interferes with long hair and makes it feel uncomfortable for users that tested it out. So far the flaws are mainly aesthetic.

The price and the release of these glasses have not yet been official yet. The glasses were publically announced in April of 2012. In April of 2013, a prototype was released where Google I/O (input/output) had access to it for $1500. The actual retail price and the set release date have not yet been verified. According to the New York Times, in February 2015, a former Apple executive, Tony Fadell, is designing the glasses and they won’t be released to the public until they are perfect. This innovative invention is highly anticipated by those in the technology realm.
Technology

Does Anyone Have the Time?

By Johnny Quach

Whenever a new form of technology comes out it’ll grab the consumer’s attention extremely fast especially if the tech is coming from big companies such as, Samsung, Apple, Sony, or Microsoft. Apple has recently, announced the Apple Watch which was released on April 24th 2015. However Samsung has already released their own tech watch out before Apple. The Apple Watch has already drawn a lot of attention from consumers regardless of Samsung’s earlier release.

The Apple watch comes in three models, one standard, one for sport and one high-end 18k gold version; it is also available in 2 sizes in 38mm and 42mm. The watch does not require an iPhone to work, however it is compatible with the 5C, 5S, 6 and 6 Plus running iOS 8.2 and up. The Apple watch can also be used as an health and fitness companion, where the device will provide its user(s) an reminder to get up and move around if they’re inactive from 10 minutes to an hour; this function varies from users to users due to setting it up. The Apple watch has numerous applications, with a little over 100,000 apps on the AppStore. You can also make and receive calls, check emails and receive notifications through the Apple watch.

The Apple watch battery life is designed for all day usage, which is defined as 18 hours but it can be charged wirelessly. The average life span for the watch is estimated to be around 3 years but it is replaceable; with this being said, the battery life span is the hit or miss for this new apple product.

The watch is available by reservation or appointment at an Apple store. Prices vary from $349-$399.
“Oh No, Not Another Expense”—The Rising Cost Of College Textbooks

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book I need because it’s much cheaper that way as long as you send it back by the due date,” said Sam Dillon, a 23-year old freshman attending Queens College. “In my opinion, it’s not necessary to buy a book that you’re only going to use once, so Amazon saves me money and I am grateful for it because one of Spanish books was over $200. I rented on Amazon for $49.00.”

Although there are ways of saving some money in this turmoil of textbook costs, the bottom line isn’t that you can go online and rent a book, but that the book’s edition changes from class to class and year to year. That can sometimes cause issues for students that may lean on going to the library and borrowing the book.

But it’s not all bad news when it comes to the inflation of textbook prices. An organization called “Open Textbooks” provides faculty written peer-reviewed college textbooks. The books are published under an open license—which means they are available free online to download, and print copies are available $10-$40, which can save a student an average of $128 yearly.

“Open textbooks saved my life,” says Chevonne Brantly, a mother of three and a part time student at La Guardia College. “My first year as a student I struggled with textbooks cost until a friend of mine told me about open textbooks and I tried it, and it was amazing, the money that I was saving. Sometimes it’s about researching or word of mouth.”

Life is hard enough for us as a whole and having additional financial burdens can be frustrating. Students apply to college to get an education and so they can have a job to provide all their monetary needs. But instead of paying full-price, go to Amazon to buy or rent a book, borrow a book from a friend, share a book with a classmate, make copies of a book or go to open textbooks and use their format in receiving your books.

Just make sure you research and ask questions if you find yourself searching for extra change for a textbook.

Also if you hear that another student is struggling, help them out by giving them any information in purchasing or renting books—“one hand washes the other hand, both hands wash the face.”
Cigarette Stomp Out

By Kevin Cuesta

Cigarette smoking has long been common throughout the nation. However, recent studies have shown that the rate of cigarette smoking has begun to decline. In 2005, the percentage of U.S. adults who smoke cigarettes was 20.9 percent. In 2013, it dropped to 17.8 percent, making it the lowest rate of smoking since this study began in 1965. These numbers are equivalent to 45.1 million cigarette smokers in 2005 and 42.1 million in 2013.

Cigarette smoking is the top cause of death and disease in the United States. On average, it kills more than 480,000 Americans yearly. That makes up about 1,300 deaths a day. In 2005, the percentage of U.S. adults who smoke cigarettes was 20.9 percent. In 2013, it dropped to 17.8 percent, making it the lowest rate of smoking since this study began in 1965. These numbers are equivalent to 45.1 million cigarette smokers in 2005 and 42.1 million in 2013.

Cigarette smoking is the top cause of death and disease in the United States. On average, it kills more than 480,000 Americans yearly. That makes up about 1,300 deaths a day. It can lead to cancer and can also be a factor in heart and metabolic diseases, which make up 40 percent of tobacco related deaths, according to the U.S. Surgeon General's report in 2014.

Many things are being done to prevent people from smoking and help regular smokers quit. Tobacco products have increased in prices over the years. New York has the highest cigarette tax, at $4.35 a pack. Some places in NYC sell cigarettes up to $14.50 a pack.

Smoke-free laws have been passed, including one that prohibits smoking in public parks and beaches. Many college campuses have become a “tobacco free zone,” including Queensborough Community College. There have also been many media campaigns, such as anti-smoking commercials.

Marina Alzate, age 20, from QCC explains that those smoking commercials helped her put the cigarette down for good.

“I was a regular [full] time smoker going to school and working two part-time jobs,” she said. “Four years into it, I ended up getting asthma. I kept seeing those horrible commercials on TV about people’s bad health and how smoking had left them. It’s been a little over a year since I last smoked and I feel better than ever.” Nineteen-year-old, Bryan Pauta, in his first semester at QCC finds it more difficult.

“I’ve been smoking since I was about 15,” he said. “Growing up in a household where my dad and uncle both did it, I became curious and that’s how it all started. I’ve been slowing down and cutting back lately, though. I realized I don’t want to continue smoking into my adulthood.

“What helped me to cut back was electronic cigarettes, because they contain less nicotine and what you inhale is vapor, rather than cigarette smoke,” he added. “It has the same effect but contains less harmful substances.”

E-cigarettes have become more popular than regular tobacco cigarettes amongst middle school kids, high school teenagers, and even some young adults in college.

“I feel like smoking has changed over the years because back then it was more of a social norm,” said another QCC student, Andrew So. “Everyone use to smoke cigarettes before, and now it’s looked at as disgusting to some people. I find it funny that I used to feel like an outcast when I didn’t smoke, and now years later, I still feel like one because I do. All my closest friends who use to smoke have quit, and I’m in the process of doing so, as well.”

First year student, Jacky Deiros, says the smoking trend is diminishing.

“In high school, everyone around me would smoke. I felt as if I couldn’t run from the smell of cigarettes,” she said. “Plus, it didn’t help that kids would sell ‘loosies’ [individual cigarettes] to other kids, making it easy for anybody to pick up a smoking habit. Although the law changed the tobacco purchasing age from 18 to 21, I know of a lot of delis that sell loosies to minors, as well.

“But coming to college, I noticed a huge difference and for the first time I felt like not everybody smoked,” she added.

Near the science building, there is a certain spot just outside the gates of the parking lot, which is often referred to as the “smoke spot” by students.

QCC student, Navindra Magra, has also recognized the change.

“Every semester, I notice a smaller group of people hanging around, smoking at the smoke spot. It’s easy to think that a great deal of people smoke at this campus because of all the cigarette butts seen on the sidewalk, but I think the truth is that it’s nothing like how it was when I came here my first semester,” she shared.

The world has woken up and has start to put the cigarette down. All it takes is for one person to spread the word and millions will follow. Perhaps, the United States can set an all time low of cigarette smoking next year again, and maybe one day the leading cause of preventable death will be put to a stop forever.

Ways to Pay for Summer Courses

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Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Gray enrolled at Drexel University, where he met and teamed up with his two web developers/ co-founders, Pirollo and Alef.

It’s been about a year and the app has already been downloaded over 92,000 times for 99 cents per download.

Scholly formulates scholarships that are linked to the person’s who downloaded it personal background. For the users, the app gives a description of the scholarship, the deadline for when the scholarship is due, and a link that allows one to see any other requirements a scholarship has in order for a student to successfully complete the scholarship.

Another convenient way to pay for summer classes, which also hits a little closer to the QCC community, is the STEM program that the school is currently offering here for students. Right now, all that one has to do is decide to take a STEM course and the program will pay for the rest of the courses a student would like to take in the summer.

Sending an application will not guarantee you getting into the program. The funds are there, and so are a limited number of spots so the sooner one applies and gets approval, the better.

All one needs to qualify for the program is to be a legal New York City Resident and to live in one of the five boroughs.

“I spent six semesters getting a degree that only takes four to get,” one student said. “I wish I had done the necessary research or I had been told about a way that would not only promote taking summer courses but would alleviate the headache of paying for them out of pocket.”

Every year millions of dollars goes unclaimed because not enough people are signing up to receive that money. Gray is an example of someone who just didn’t take no for an answer. His relentlessness should be emulated by students everywhere and his app should only make it easier for students to continue to dig and research and alleviate the burden of paying for school.
Benihana: A Review
By Amanda Gannon

Benihana is a small Japanese restaurant with over 70 locations around the world. Benihana was founded and created by Hiroaki Aoki and is named after Hiroaki’s parent’s coffee shop in Tokyo.

After college, Hiroaki moved to the United States. He started off by selling ice cream in Harlem. He spent his nights studying restaurant management. Hiroaki saved about $10,000 and was able to get a loan for his restaurant and in 1964, the first Benihana restaurant opened up on W 56th Street, in New York. Benihana is America’s first teppanyaki restaurant. This means that the tables have steel grills on the tables to cook right in front of customers and it features a Japanese farmhouse interior.

Benihana has sushi, seafood, chicken, steak, and many more other options as well as many drink options too. When you order an entree, you get different sides before your meal is made. Before the entree is made, you get onion soup, salad, shrimp appetizer, vegetables, rice, many dipping sauces, and green tea. It is a lot of food.

Benihana can be a bit pricey, but you get so many sides that come with the entree for the price of one meal. It is a great place to get great food and get to experience the Japanese culture.

Benihana is located at 2105 Northern Blvd., Manhasset, NY 11030.

The Benefit of Taking Dance Classes
By Silvia Caguana

There are many exercises that you can do to improve your physical health, which can help you to accomplish the goal of losing weight or maintaining weight. One of those exercises is dancing, since when you dance, you are in constant movement. You get to increase your aerobic fitness, your muscle mass and tone.

While dancing, one will also get to be socially healthy because when you start to learn how to dance in a studio or in a class in college, you will meet other people that are also trying to learn.

There are many ways that you can learn how to dance. One of them is by joining a dance studio. One of the dance studios that you can join is called Lorenz Dance Studio. The styles that are taught in the school are bachata, salsa, merengue, rumba and cha cha, samba, swing, hustle, fox trot, waltz, Viennese waltz and tango. There is a monthly fee of $45 if you are a student, with a general fee of $55 per person or $90 for couples. There are four different Lorenz Dance studios - one in Glendale, Corona, the Bronx and Manhattan.

There is another dance studio called Dance Sport, where you can also go to in Manhattan. It is well known for offering different dance styles, and each one of the styles has its own room.

Another option is to take dance classes in college. At Queensborough Community College, the dance classes that are offered are Beginning Modern Dance, Beginning Ballet, Jazz Dance, African and Afro-Caribbean Dance, Musical Theatre Dance and more. Intermediate and advanced classes are offered, too.

““The benefits of dance is wide ranging, dance keeps you physically fit, you don't need to go by any equipment to dance, cardiovascular benefits, helps with your heart rate, helps with your weight,” said June Mapp, a dance instructor at QCC.

“I love dancing and since I am from the Dominican Republic I like the Latin music, so I thought that this would be a comfort class where I can be myself,” said Ashley, who is a student in the Latin Dance class. “The people in the class are very helpful, when someone needs help they say do you need help, and is a way to know that you don’t have to worry about not being perfect.”

According to Health.gov, dancing can improve the condition of a person’s heart and lungs it increases muscle strength, endurance and motor fitness. It can also help you manage your weight. According to Cosmopolitan, you can burn as many as 453 calories in 60 minutes when you dance. You will get to distract yourself, and it can help you lower your stress level.

It is a great way to get some entertainment doing something different. By going to dance classes, you will also learn to get along with other people while working in groups. Dance can become one of your favorite forms of exercise. In the long run, when you dance, you won’t feel like you are really working out. Instead, you will feel like you are just doing something for fun.

Other benefits of learning how to dance is the satisfaction that you will get if you decided to volunteer to teach other people how to dance. Once you learn the moves, it becomes easy to teach people the techniques that you know, which can be very rewarding. Learning how to dance can also benefit your social health, which is essential to be overall, a healthy person.
Intuition can be defined as the aptitude to understand a concept, idea or situation, without the need for conscious rationalization. Through decades of research, this suspicion has been compared to natural reasoning primarily. It is because of this research that intuition is now being called “The Sixth Sense.”

According to the Harvard University Gazette, in 1999, Doctors Emily Liman and David Corey of Harvard University have managed to pin point a specific gene for a sixth sense while exploring different research related to a now mutated part of the human body. The vomeronasal organ (VNO) at one time granted the ability to detect a certain type of chemical known as pheromones. This tiny organ is located slightly behind the nostrils inside the dividing septum and is connected to the part of the brain which is responsible for hormone production: the hypothalamus. Pheromones are thought of as ‘behavior-changing agents.’ Therefore, the previously useful VNO would have provided physical proof that humans can detect a wide range of emotion such as aggression, fear and arousal.

Did you know that it is possible to become ‘physiologically aligned’ with a loved one? A research team led by Doctor Trisha Stratford of the University of Technology in Sydney Australia, studied the brains and heartbeats of 30 volunteers during counselling sessions which pointed to these couples being able to function in an altered state. During these sessions, the team found that the couples being interviewed had nearly perfectly in sync nervous systems and brain waves. According to Dr. Stratford, this means they had “reached a state in which their nervous systems were ticking over in harmony, helping them to know each other’s thoughts and emotions.”

Multiple doctors worldwide have proved there are unexplainable connections, between mind and body. As seen on PsychologyToday.com, extensive research was conducted in order to produce solid biological proof.

The patient experiences a sequence of images consisting of both calming and provocative content. The computer then repeats the sequence a number of times and provides the researcher with two specific graphs of the participants’ blood pressure before, during and after each image. In this case, the result was a dramatic change in blood flow in response to emotional images and little to no response to calm images. Most would wonder what the significance is, as this seems to be a regular human response. However, it was then explained that the different graphs indicate that the patient’s body responded to emotional images before they were even shown thereby proving the theory of intuition!

That unexplained ‘gut feeling’ is undeniably very real. There are hard facts in the form of hundreds of scientific tests and research worldwide. However, the most intriguing question still remains: “Is there more?” The answers to that question are infinite and for now, can be thought of as unidentified connections between one being and another, or a transcendental understanding of one’s own capacity. Wherever the universe brings us, the fact of the matter is that human beings carry hidden gifts that have yet to be recognized. As a species in relation to the progression of human intuition, we have plenty to look forward to.

A Night with Heroes: Queensborough Students Respond to Genocide through Music, Poetry and Dance

By Nataly Rivera

On April 16th, 2015, Queensborough Community College dedicated the night to honoring Holocaust survivors. Students put together a show along with an art exhibition that was both spectacular and moving. A group of talented individuals and several guests contributed to what can only be described as a memorable night. Students tackled the difficult issue of genocide through music, poetry, and dance.

One of the opening acts was a poem written by Queensborough’s own Neil Malcolm McKnight, titled “I Am Genocide.” The poem set the mood for the audience, making us feel each powerful word as he spoke them. “So you ask, what is Genocide?” he began. “Simple. It’s humanity’s most deepest and darkest thoughts, while painted in blood of millions, and still counting.” McKnight’s captivating last words left the audience anticipating what was to come.

What came was nothing short of breathtaking. Vivid music played as dance students Tiffany Brown and Shamika Wilson walked out on stage. Performing a piece titled “In My Skin,” both Brown and Wilson captured the dark side of humanity and transformed it into dance. Wilson, who choreographed this dance, took on the persona of an individual who was constantly knocked down by the judgmental views of others, represented by Brown. However, towards the end, Wilson brilliantly strives and manages to finish the dance as a strong and confident woman. Wilson said that she decided that her character would eventually triumph over the judgmental views of others and become free of concerns about her appearance.

The show was enlivened by music educator, Steven Dahlke. His humorous remarks kept the audience entertained in between sets. Several performances, which included special guests from the Corona Youth Music Project and Community Choir, continued to fill the night with different forms of art.

A particularly moving moment came through a short film titled “Moving through Surveillance: A Student Collaboration.” Students from English 101 and 102 classes worked with peers from Dance 251 to create a unique and creative idea. Their task was to consider their individual relationships with systems of power before exploring genocide and its global implications. The film demonstrated each student’s dedication and passion towards their assignment, which ultimately became personal.

English Professor Aliza Atik was part of the journey. “I hope [students] took away that their own experiences are valuable. I also hope they took away the understanding that some things happen on a global scale and sometimes it’s hard for us as humans to wrap our minds around certain monstrosities, but when we recognize that the same power structures exist in our own lives—whether it’s our experience in school being bullied or whether it’s the power disparities between the police and the population in which they are policing or whether its something on a global scale—I want them to see structurally it’s very similar.”

Judging by the testimonies presented in the film by participating students, this project was clearly a success. Toward the end of the magical evening, the audience gave a round of applause was given to the Holocaust survivors who so generously made time to see the show. As they stood they smiled and waved to the audience, expressing pride and gratitude. Photographic portraits and biographical summaries of all Holocaust survivors who attended can be found at the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Center.

After the performance ended one survivor, Lena Goren, who was born in 1930 in a German village named Salonika, said she felt very touched by the performance.

“The thing that moved me the most is when they were saying ‘Ani Ma Amin’ because I pictured my grandparents, my uncles, my aunts and everybody that I knew, relatives and friends who did exactly that when they were dying. I am sure they said ‘Ani Ma Amin, Ani Ma Amin,’ I believe, I believe. That is what moved me the most; however the rest of the program was fabulous, and the work that they put in was wonderful. Thank you so much for making it possible, I love you all so much, thanks again a million times.”

Au contraire, Ms. Goren, the QCC community was lucky to have so many valuable and brave guests. As the night came to an end, it was evident how far we have come. The amount of progress made was clear as each and every student walked out, in all different shades and costumes, yet still a community.
“Fast and Furious 7” Is a Bittersweet Ride
By Giuseppe Gagliardi

Fast 7 was released on April 3rd, 2015, and since then car enthusiasts have been going crazy. The Fast & Furious movies have always been a big part of the car world. Since 2001 the Fast & Furious movies have been getting better and better. They are always known for their action and insane car racing, but this time, Fast 7 may seem to serve a different purpose.

Fast 7 has a lot of action, but this time around, the movie was more upsetting than exciting, especially at the end. This is because there was a tribute to Paul Walker at the end of the movie to acknowledge Paul Walker’s death on November 30th, 2013, when he died in a car accident in California. The sad part about his death was that Paul Walker was not even driving the Porsche. It was his friend who was driving when they crashed into a tree and he died instantaneously.

This tribute was heart breaking. It showed Vin Diesel and Paul Walker, meeting up like old times and driving together down this spectacular mountain, and at a certain part the mountain splits. Vin Diesel, playing the character of Dominick Toretto, and Paul Walker, as Brian O’Connor end up going their separate ways. This moment in the movie signifies that Walker’s death will not take away the strength of their brotherhood. After this scene in the movie, I looked around the movie theater and I can say that many of the people were crying. I must agree it was very sad. I think the tribute was expected. It wouldn’t make sense for the director John Singleton to ignore the fact that many of the people who were watching the movie had heard about Paul Walker’s death.

I was not surprised at how amazing the action was in the movie, I mean, Dom and Brian stole a car that was worth over a million dollars, that belonged to the Jordanian Prince, and ended up totaling the car because they had flown through three buildings, after their plan to steal it backfired. Also the fighting scene, between Letty, Dom’s wife and the female guard at the prince’s party when Dom and Paul were trying to steal the car from the Jordanian’s vault was quite entertaining and ridiculous at the same time. I must say that the cast did a great job as usual, and I could not find a single flaw in this movie.

It was the perfect movie because of the intensity of the action, and the emotional attachment people had towards the film. Within the weekend that the movie was released, the box offices made $147,187,040. By April 15th, 2015, the movie earned a whopping $262,437,800. Also, 230 cars were destroyed in the making of Fast 7.

In order to complete the filming of the movie, Paul’s brothers had to play parts in the movie, while Paul’s head was edited on to their bodies, and also his voice was used to voice over Paul’s character.

All in all, the movie was the best Fast and Furious movie in my opinion, and is worth every penny, especially if you are a car enthusiast. I am sure that you will enjoy the movie, although you may tear up at the end, it’s worth it. If you have not seen this movie yet, I recommend that you do. Besides the beautiful tribute at the end for Paul Walker, the movie is basically two hours of beautiful cars, women, and action. It really can’t get much better than that!

Furious 7: Paul Walker’s Legacy
By Jessica Calderon

Even the toughest of men cry at the last 10 minutes of Furious 7 in tribute to Paul Walker.

There have been seven movies about a guy named Dom Toretto, played by Vin Diesel. He is an ex-convict who races cars for a living. An FBI agent named Brian O’Connor, played by Paul Walker, tries to arrest Dom throughout the first movie. In the sequel, Brian befriends Dom and they end up racing together and catching the criminals who drag race or do multiple crimes.

The main characters’ motto is “Ride or Die.” No matter what the consequence, they will never betray each other and always be by each other till death. Everyone in Dom’s crew is considered family, especially behind the scenes outside of the movie.

When Paul Walker died in a high-speed car crash on November 30, 2013, the news was all over television and social media, especially since he was in the middle of filming Furious 7.

According to Sean O’Connell’s who wrote about the effect of Walker’s death for Cinemablend.com, “The FAST & FURIOUS saga is about family. The characters are connected by the bond of family, and it is how all of us who have worked together for more than thirteen years feel about each other. It certainly defines how we feel about our fans. Our family experienced an unthinkable shock in November. We had to take time to grieve Paul, the brother we love and lost, and to figure out if we should move on with our film.”

Paul Walker’s cast was devastated. Vin Diesel was especially distraught about the situation because they were like brothers on set, as well as off set. Vin Diesel posted a very sentimental message on Facebook that said, “When I heard, I immediately flew back to California, and went directly from the plane to his mother’s house… I thought they needed my strength, but realized when I got there and broke down before his family, that it was I who needed theirs. His mother hugged me and said I am so sorry…I said sorry? You’re the mother who lost a son? She said yes, but you lost your other half…”

For half of the movie Paul Walker’s role was played by his brothers, Caleb and Cody

“I wasn’t noticeable to me at least that the brother played his part at the end,” said John Romano, a Queensborough Community College student. “They did a good CGI effect on his brother’s face to make it look more like Paul.”

Romano also stated, “When I saw the end scene of the movie where they gave him a tribute and showed him in the other previous movies, I got the chills. It was like I saw all the other movies and had a connection with him. It must have been a hard shot to film.”

During the tribute to Paul Walker at the end of the Furious 7, a song played called “See You Again” by Wiz Khalifa featuring Charlie Puth. This song made the scene more emotional because the lyrics were written specifically for Paul Walker and the movie. Through this tribute, viewers can feel how much Walker will be missed.

“Music is so important when watching a movie or television show,” said Michael Contino, a former Queensborough Community College student who loves the Furious saga. “After seeing the movie, I kept listening to that song again and again. The lyrics matched perfectly with the lives of the characters.”

At the MTV awards, Vin Diesel conducted an interview with Josh Horowitz. Diesel said, “Paul used to say that [Fast & Furious 8] was guaranteed and, in some ways, when your brother guarantees something, you have to make sure it comes to pass. So if fate has it – fate, F8 – then you’ll get it. ‘Furious 7’ was for Paul, 8 is from Paul.”

As Paul Walker himself said, “If one day the speed kills me, do not cry because I was smiling.”
Don’t Count Us Out Yet!: The Queensborough Lady Tigers

By Stephanie Rodriguez

Midway through their season, the Queensborough Community College softball team suffered two devastating losses to Dutchess Community College, which greatly diminished their chances of making the playoffs. The score ended with a 10-2 loss in the first game of the double header, and 14-0 in the second game. The Lady Tigers had Dutchess under control in the first innings, but made numerous errors throughout the rest of the game that resulted in the loss.

“The team felt disappointed [and] in a way that we really beat ourselves,” said catcher Andrelina Gil. “I feel the team could have definitely done better. We could have done so many things different, such as [having] better communication.”

Following the tough losses throughout the beginning of the season, the team used these negative events to help them improve on their next games.

“It’s hard to get young ladies to commit,” said coach Pete Marchitello. “There are a lot of young ladies in this school that can play softball but a lot of them have work commitments.”

The team tends to be out playing seven to eight hours a day if they have a double-header, which can be very tiring.

Though coach Marchitello admits the team has made quite a few errors, and walked too many batters, he says that they are also working really hard and improving every day. Motivation to learn from their mistakes has pushed them forward.

“Practices were more intense,” explained Gil. “We knew what we had to do to become a better team. Our chemistry became stronger, enough to make us better and build from our mistakes and not tear us down.”

Despite their rough start, the Lady Tigers went into their next game with confidence and a goal of winning, which resulted in a magnificent comeback on April 15, with two victories against Westchester Community College.

They played an outstanding double header which resulted in a score of nine to seven and a score of six to four in the second game, allowing them a chance to be considered for play-offs.

“Playing well is more important than winning,” stated Coach Marchitello. “They definitely get discouraged, but they’re learning to control their emotions. And they’re learning to fight and to battle. They’re getting it.”

The next stop for the Lady Tigers is Westchester CC to play in the Region XV softball tournament. The winner will advance to the district championships.

Champions League

By William Delima

The UEFA Champions League is an annual soccer competition that takes place in Europe, organized by the Union of European Soccer associations. It’s one of the biggest European club competitions. The UEFA League starts in the group stages, with eight groups, and within each group are four teams.

For the teams to make it to the next stage of the tournament, they must place first or second in their group. The winner of the Champions League qualifies to compete in the FIFA Club World Cup, which will put them up against the best teams the world has to offer.

Real Madrid is the most successful team, winning 10 UEFA champion’s league titles. During the group stages, Real Madrid came in first place with 18 points in Group B. In the group with Madrid was FC Basel from Switzerland, which came in second place. Coming in third place was Liverpool from England and PFC Ludogorets from Bulgaria came in fourth place.

After the group stages, Real Madrid was up against a German team named Schalke and ended up beating them 5-4 to make it into the quarter-finals against Atletico Madrid, a known rival of Real Madrid in the Spanish league. In the quarter-finals, Real Madrid successfully defeated Atletico Madrid 1-0 to advance to the semi-finals.

Real Madrid’s next opponent in the UEFA is Juventus from Italy. The other teams in the semi-finals are Barca from Spain and Bayern from Germany. The games are scheduled to play on May 5 and May 6.

If Real Madrid passes through the finals alongside Barca, the game will be titled El Clásico because in the Spanish league they are the two most prominent soccer clubs. They also have two of the most reputable players in the world, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, which makes these games even more exciting.
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Malcolm X once said, “The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that’s power, because they control the minds of the masses.”

It is apparent that Hollywood and other mainstream media sources use their influence to promote the stereotyping of different races and religious faiths. Hollywood has been utilizing stereotypes of different races and religions for financial gain without the consideration of the repercussions it would have on society.

Many races have fallen victim to that, and had to endure the permanent stereotype that has been stamped on them by Hollywood. One of the many ethnic groups that has had to endure such stereotyping from Hollywood are Arabs and Arab-Americans.

Due to worldwide events over the past 15 years, Arabs have become feared and hated by many around the world. Hollywood has capitalized on that hate and fear, and began to embrace it as form of entertainment.

According to Jack Shaheen, author of the bestseller “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,” “Arabs remain the most maligned group in the history of Hollywood. Malevolent stereotypes equating Islam and Arabs with violence have endured for more than a century … Arab=Muslim=Godless Enemy.”

Some might say that the entertainment industry’s vilifying of Arabs and Muslims and even helped to prepare the American public to go to war in the Middle East.

This phenomenon began prior to 9/11. There are many films post-9/11 that portray Arabs as anti-American villains, suicide bombers or just uncivilized barbarians. Mazin B. Qumsiyeh states in his article “100 Years of Anti-Arab and anti-Muslim Stereotyping,” “the predominant stereotype by far has been the ‘Arab bombers.’ In old movies G. I. Jane and Operation Condor, viewers chant as a hero blows away Arabs.”

Other movies like Operation Condor that depict Arabs as inhumane villains. Films such as Iron Eagle, Death Before Dishonor, Navy SEALs, Patriot Games, the American President, Delta Force 3, Executive Decision, Rendition, promote the killing of Arabs by showing the American military eliminating them “for the good of all.”

Sadly, this promotion of stereotyping has gotten much worse since 9/11. At that time, the fear and hate of Arabs and Muslims had been at an all-time high. When asked about this trend Marouane Chouaieb stated, “There has to be a bad guy in every movie, and we’re just the flavor of the month.”

“These movies are racist and promote ignorance in our society,” said an Arab female from Queensborough Community College. “It’s bad enough that I have people thousands of miles away from me representing me with views that I don’t agree with, but I also have to deal with my neighbors and classmates being afraid of me.”

The sad truth is we are all victims of the mainstream media and its influence, whether we are among the hated and feared or among the ones programmed to hate and fear. Both sides share the social damages inflicted by media. We Americans who are diverse become fearful of diversity and hate what we don’t understand; we become scholars of ignorance with movies and TV shows as our references and ultimately lose sight of social peace.

Photo Credit: electronicintifada.net
Thank you, Queensborough

By Joseph Wolkin

It has been nearly two years since I came to Queensborough Community College. Like most incoming students from a local high school, I was rather ashamed that I was not going to a prestigious four-year institution.

But from the start, it was pretty obvious that hard work would propel me into a world full of success. It took some time to get adjusted to Queensborough, and I was very angry at myself for not trying harder in high school. However, coming to this two-year school ended up becoming the best choice that I could have made for myself.

As a journalist, I do not have a lot of spare time on my hands. I do a lot of freelance work, so school comes second behind my career for rather obvious reasons—especially when you have a chance to break into your desired field a lot sooner than most. Time management became troublesome, and my ASAP advisor, Bridget, guided me to success in my first semester.

Eventually, I settled into my role as a slightly above average student in an environment that consists of over 16,000 students. Switching over to an English concentration, Queensborough finally gave me the opportunity that I had been searching for.

The Communique has struggled over the years. It is not a secret. The City University of New York is not known for journalism at its four-year institutions, let alone in a community college. However, when I became the editor for this paper, I realized how much potential it had to be a success.

My goal was simple: help the newspaper become more popular on campus and dramatically improve the writing. The first one has been fantastic, as readership online has increased, along with our print edition throughout the 34-acre campus.

But this group has considerably improved over the past year.

Hours upon hours are spent to make this publication work. We want to inform students about the opportunities Queensborough presents people, along with the imperfections of the campus, such as the well-known issue of the construction within the Science Building, which has been represented in the paper on multiple occasions over the past year.

However, the eccentric ways that things are done at Queensborough must come to an end. Along with my fellow colleagues, I experienced issues getting set to transfer following graduation this spring. Transcripts not being set, CUNY’s rather unorganized way of articulating through applicants, along with the everyday stress of classes nearly drove me off a wall.

Transferring should not be something to stress about. It is an achievement that only should be appreciated by the college, but should seemingly be easy to do. Though transferring colleges will always have some levels of stress—such as filing out the FAFSA and figuring out the institution one wants to attend—Queensborough continuously makes mistakes that are not so small.

One student requested to have his transcript sent to the State University of New York. However, the registrar failed to send it to the institution, which has since delayed his application status.

On the up side, when problems like this occur, the registrar is more than willing to accept responsibility for the mistakes and will fix it almost immediately.

The registrar is constantly packed, and the staff is certainly getting overwhelmed. Governor Andrew Cuomo has proposed another series of budget cuts for the City University of New York, which would get rid of $95.1 million throughout all of the CUNY institutions, according to PSC CUNY – the union that represents the staff at CUNY.

Budget cuts would continue to decrease the lack of staff to help to students transfer to different schools. However, if there were a handful of additions to the registrar, along with other departments across the campus, faculty and staff will not be under as much pressure, thus limiting the mistakes that are made.

In a December 2012 edition of the Communique, Laura Acosta reported the combined graduation and transfer rate had decreased to 37.4 percent. Well, now it is down to 35.2 percent, according to College Measures.

Too many students have recurring issues, and it truly is not fair. As the school moves forward to prosperous times in a city that has such wonderful people in it, Queensborough can excel to be a leader in the CUNY system.

And as I say farewell to the institution that has taught me how to be an adult and accept responsibilities, I can truly speak about how wonderful this school is. Without Queensborough, I, along with thousands of other students, would not have the chance of a lifetime to go to their dream college. Without Queensborough, I would not have had the opportunity to work with such great people at this publication. Without Queensborough, I would not be on pace to graduate within two years and attend a top institution to continue to pursue my career in writing.
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