



Growing Our Libraries at the Q300 Elementary and Middle Schools

By Maura McDermott

Q300 families and educators are rallying to keep up with students' voracious appetite for books, as parents donate volumes at both campuses and create a take-one-leave-one mini-library at the middle school.

And while book collections grow in classrooms and administrative spaces, the Parent Teacher Association is researching possible sources of funding and support for book collections.

At the middle school campus last month, sixth-grade parent Will Bachman constructed two bookcases in the administrative office, spanning 15 feet of shelf space. The bookcases have been filling up with donated books ranging from Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* and Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door* to the *How to Train Your Dragon* series. Students are invited to either borrow books, or keep them and donate their own in exchange.

"So many people have stories about how as children they found some book that was just transformative to their childhood," Bachman said. "Assigned reading is great, it's important, but it's also so important to be able to explore and select their own books and find something that speaks to them."

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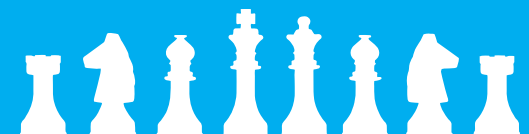
K1 Student Wins 2nd Place in Chess Tournament

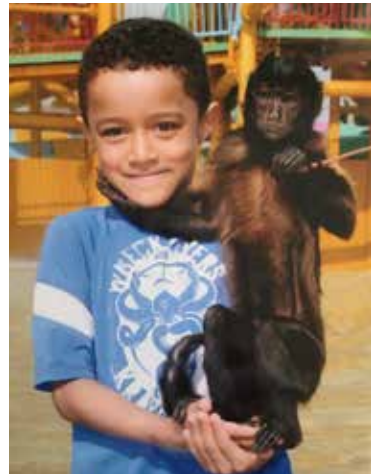
By Eileen Yim

Zachery Yim of K1 started playing chess about 6 months ago and truly

loves the game. He participates in the NYChessKids after-school program at Q300 on Wednesdays. On January 22, Zachery competed in a tournament hosted by NYChessKids at NEST+m, where there were 300 participants from NEST+m, Hunter, and other schools. Zachery was the only Q300 participant in his level, Novice 1-kindergarteners and 1st graders, where he competed primarily against players from NEST+m. NEST+m has one of the strongest chess teams in the country! There are 4 rounds in the tournament and a chance for a trophy for the top 10 players. In the end, he won his first 3 matches and lost in the finals to the 1st place contestant, finishing 2nd overall in his group of 33 competitors. We are really proud of him for finishing strong and representing our great Q300 school! Congratulations, Zachery!

The next NYChessKids tournaments are being held on March 5 at NEST+m and on March 19 at PS 116. For more information or to register, please visit nychesskids.com/tournament/nestm-tournaments/ and nychesskids.com/tournament/ps-116-tournaments.





Q300 On Winter Break!

ROW ONE: **Penelope**, First Grade, at Ski Cooper in Colorado; **Abby**, Second Grade and **Westley**, First Grade, in Thailand; **Aiden**, Second Grade, with his cousin on Christmas; **Stephanie**, Third Grade, at the Golden Gate Bridge. ROW TWO: **Myriam**, Third Grade, in Cancun; **Alex**, First Grade, at the Inaugural Ride of the Second Avenue Subway; **Celine**, Second Grade, enjoying the snow. ROW THREE: **Jason**, First Grade, at his first hockey class; **Emily**, Seventh Grade, snorkelling with her family in "dry suits" in Iceland; **Anika**, Second Grade, at Disney World; **Greyson**, First Grade, in Cancun. ROW FOUR: **James**, Third Grade, at Uno's New Year's Eve kids' party; **Eric**, First Grade, at the Farm Museum.

First Grade Trip to NYSCI

By Mandy Jaramillo

The first graders had a fantastic time at the New York Hall of Science on February 7. They explored many exhibits and learned about microbes, water weight and mirrors (and how different angles create different reflections) and so much more. But bubbles won the day! These young scientists learned that light causes a rainbow reflection in bubbles and that even if you blow a bubble through a star-shaped wand, it will always come out a sphere. And they had a splash doing it! 🌈



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The new library has been a hit with students.

“I donated some books and I like the variety of books from everyone else,” sixth-grader Agatha said. “I’m going to borrow one this weekend.”

Her classmate Namulun said, “The library looks nice on the shelves in the office. I remember reading some of the books before and I want to re-read them. There are some new ones I want to read, too!”

In middle-school classrooms, teachers of literacy, math, science and other subjects maintain their own collections of books.

At the elementary school, each classroom has its own book collection, and the teacher workroom has space for more volumes.

“In both buildings we have classroom libraries where students are checking out leveled books in the case of the elementary school and general interest books in the case of the middle school,” Assistant Principal Kristina Jelinek said. And educators have been thrilled with the donations from families, she said: “parents have been really generous and thoughtful.”

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At both campuses, families have been donating books from their own collections. The school has received more than 10 overstuffed boxes and bags of books, including a box donated by Scholastic thanks to Eric Black, father of an incoming sixth grader, and five boxes donated by sixth-grade teacher Betty Eck. In addition, a not-for-profit group called Book Fairies donated four boxes of books last year. Many thanks to the parents who have helped lug all those books up the stairs, including Sharone David and Johnny Farraj!

The Q300 elementary school shares space with PS 17, and the middle school shares space with IS 126. PS 17 and IS 126 have libraries, though they are not staffed by librarians. Throughout New York City, the number of public school libraries has fallen from nearly 1,500 in 2005 to fewer than 700 in 2014, according to a 2015 article in *Education Week*.

Parent volunteers are researching ways to provide more support to the book collections. Lynn Kennedy, a Co-Vice President of Community Affairs for the PTA, is looking into potential sources of city and state funding for the libraries, including a request for state funding for a co-located technology lab at the middle school and a request for city funding for a co-located technology and research center at the elementary school. Kindergarten parents Meghan Cirrito and Kim Alexandrescu also have been looking into ways to provide more support, and a new PTA library subcommittee is in the works.

“It’s heart-warming to see that parents are so willing to roll up their sleeves and think of creative ways to keep building up our libraries,” said Maria Hantzopoulos, Co-President of the PTA.

Families are welcome to donate more books. For the elementary school, families can give books directly to a teacher if they are for a specific classroom, bring them to the main office, or email Paula Marisi at membership@q300pta.org. For the middle school, families can bring books to the main office.

When needed, Principal Bill Biniaris, Kristina and Parent Coordinator Dora Fiotodimitrakis can transfer the books between campuses.

“Bill and I are back and forth all the time and so is Dora so we’re able to transport them,” Kristina said. “We’ll make sure they get to the right place.” 📚



Winterfest International Potluck is Delicious Fun!

By Sarah Willett Chang

The Q300 community came together to honor our diverse student body with an international potluck festival on January 27. Following our general meeting, students and families were invited to socialize and mingle, while sampling dishes with an international flair. Dishes ranged from sushi to empanadas; mini samosas to black forest cake. Between the appetizers, main dishes, and desserts, there was plenty to please any palate.

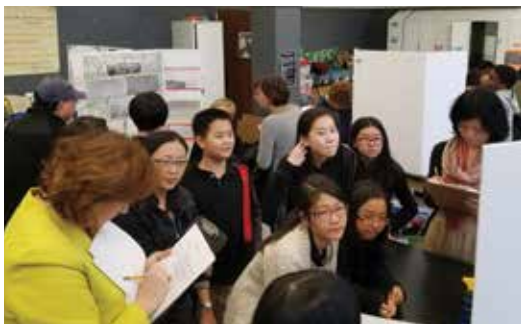
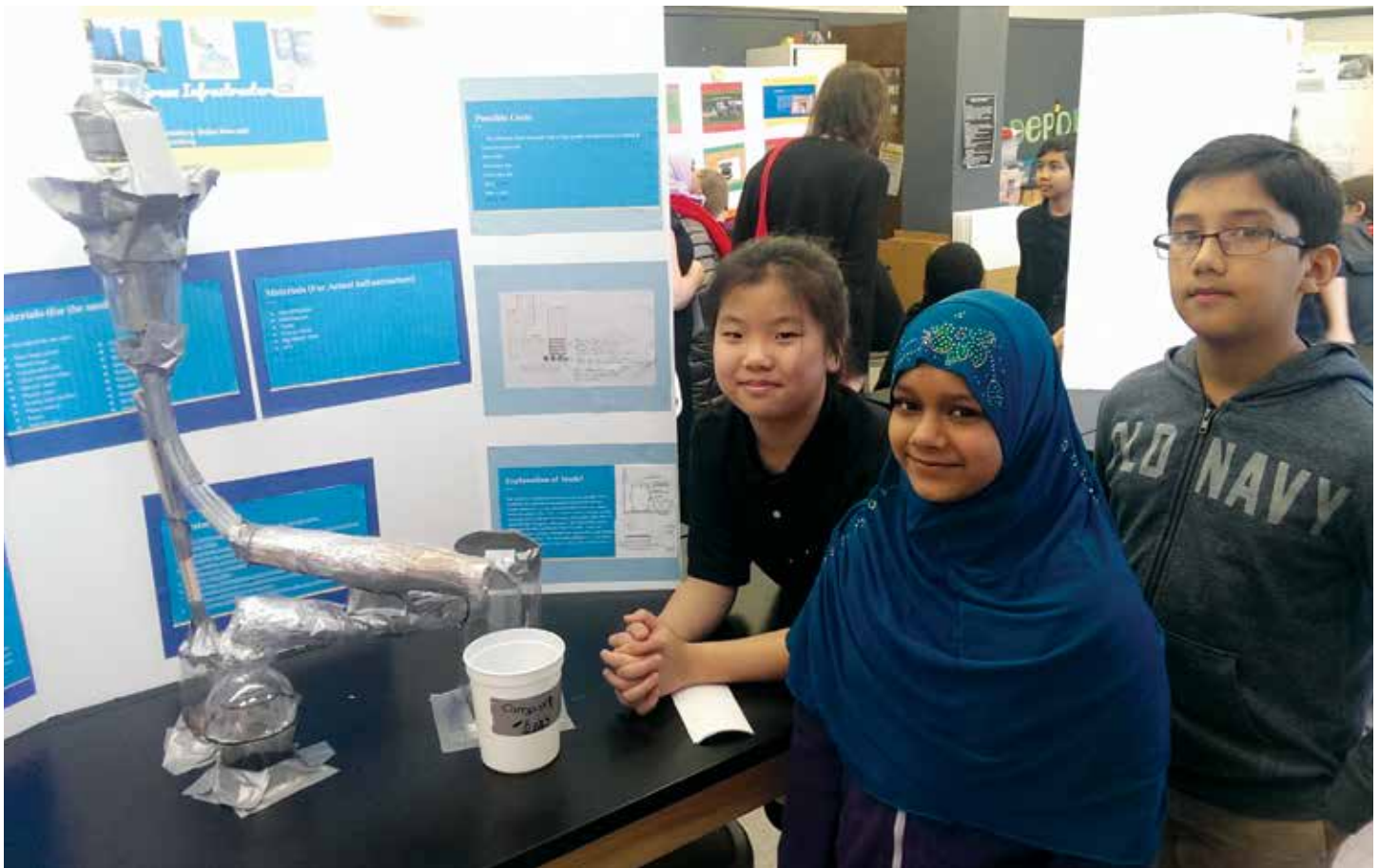
Each grade created an activity table; the projects were creative and culturally inspired. Students were challenged to pick up marbles with chopsticks in a game that tested their fine motor skills, solve riddles on Chinese lanterns, and pin the horn on a unicorn. There was also button-making, glitter tattoos, and scratch art. The children were drawn to the tables, and there was rarely an empty space.

Whether or not you attended the event, be sure to contribute your favorite recipes to the first edition of the Q300 International Potluck Cookbook by March 3.

We held a small silent auction and raffle, which were both successes. Raffle tickets for a Playmobil set, an art easel, Bare Burger gift card, and remote control toy dog were sold at the event. Great prizes such as a two-week summer camp voucher to Kids Creative Arts Camp, a discount valid for the Central Queens Y Explorer or Pioneer Camp, and tickets to Kaufman Music were auctioned off. With close to 200 people in attendance, we netted over \$2,500 from the proceeds from the auction, raffle, and donation jar!

Of course, Q300 students would probably say the best part was spending some down time with their friends; PTA-sponsored events always provide a great opportunity for fun in a safe and low-key environment.

Whether or not you attended the event, be sure to contribute your favorite recipes to the first edition of the Q300 International Potluck Cookbook, which will be published later this spring. Visit www.typensave.com, and enter user ID: Q300PTA / password: inclusion. The deadline is March 3. We look forward to seeing everything our diverse and unique community has to offer! 🍴



Sixth Grade Green Infrastructure Challenge Presentations

By Jenny Lando

Following a semester of work looking at water issues in and around NYC, the 6th graders were tasked with developing proposals for green infrastructure for the school. Examples of green infrastructure include a green roof, urban

tree canopy, and permeable pavement, among other possible projects.

Using materials and information received in class, as well as images and documentation from various sources, the students were put into groups of 3 or 4 and sent off to create.

Each project required research into types of green infrastructure already in place within city limits and elsewhere, costs of materials, and uses of water runoff for various purposes. Students also investigated CSO (combined sewer overflow) and learned how flooding or heavy rainfall and fast snow melt can lead to issues with the city's plumbing.

On three mornings in January, parents and expert guests were invited to hear the proposals. The water science

experts included Kim Estes-Fradis, Deputy Director of Education and Outreach, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP); Robin Sanchez, Deputy Director of Education, DEP; Tyler Van Fleet, Watershed Educators, Watershed Agricultural Council; and Amanda Levy, Water Ecologist, Department of Health.

Betty, the science teacher, gave a quick overview of the assignment and then parents were asked to be quality listeners and evaluate each project (both poster board and oral presentations) by each of the groups. The rubric asked parents to note if ideas were presented clearly, if the project seemed feasible and if the overall project was comprehensive.

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Second Grade Architecture Celebration

By Dan Bach

On January 13, the second grade parents saw the culmination of an architectural collaboration with the Center of Architecture. In the Explorations Room, the students explained what types of scale model buildings they built that represented the Q300 neighborhood. From Athena Park to the local 7-11 and even the funeral home they were able to show the parents what they learned in the program. Students demonstrated both excellent oratory skills as well as their model making talents for this project. 🗣️



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE *continued from page 5*

Parents rotated among the exhibits which included a poster board detailing the research and plans, as well as a working model of the chosen infrastructure. Each member of the group took turns presenting their green infrastructure ideas. The models often incorporated found objects or kitchen items. Most plans included a grassy area with subsurface filtration to not only use some rainfall for plantings, but to also slow the water's progress to any sewers nearby. Some included specific types of plantings for produce which could be used within the school lunchroom, or given to food pantries. Several ideas included adding a gutter system to the existing roof to help collect rainwater in barrels on the ground. This water could be picked up and carted off to local gardens or merely emptied into sewers after a storm had passed to help with the CSO issues.

Students were well prepared to discuss their findings and excited to have an audience to bounce ideas off of. Parents asked some tough questions. At the end, parents were asked to select the "winner" of grant money based on the comprehensiveness and feasibility of the plan. However, all the projects were successful in our eyes. ☺



Letter from the PTA Co-Presidents

Dear Q300 families,

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that we are already in 2017, and that we are well into the second half of the school year. We hope everyone enjoyed the mid-winter break and that your kids came back to school recharged and rested.

It has been a tremendous year for all of us at Q300. Not only do we have a wonderful new principal, Bill Biniaris, and several fantastic new teachers across our campuses, but also our school has doubled in student size from last year with almost 400 students. When we started, we were just over 100 students, and each year, we continue to grow, develop and evolve into a fully seeded school. We are also thrilled to have our very first graduating class of eighth graders this June. Exciting times at Q300!

The PTA is truly proud of what we have accomplished thus far as a whole membership body this year — from our inaugural picnic to our low-key movie nights to our big events like the Costume Party and the very recent Winter International Festival and Potluck. We have bonded over food, friendship and fun and we look forward to connecting with you at our remaining community events including our wildly fun Stepping into Summer Dance Party and Auction on May 7th, 2017! Stay tuned for information on how to get tickets to this incredible, not-to-be missed annual event.

In March alone, we still have a lot on deck — including another joint Movie Night, the Pizzeria UNO's gatherings, bake sales at the conferences, our inaugural school-wide cookbook, and our FUN-tastic Zumbathon, all of which build community and raise needed funds that help support our school. We will also be in the midst of our March Madness campaign, which is a giant push to get our Direct Appeal participation rates up to 100%. In previous years, we have had around 79% of families participate in the Direct Appeal. We are confident that we can exceed that percentage this year with your help. We can do this together!

Finally, we sincerely appreciate all of the families who support the work of the PTA. Whether it is by volunteering at events, donating prizes for our raffles and auctions, staffing tables at events, helping in the classroom, working on projects to benefit the school, or donating through our Direct Appeal campaign, your contributions help bring much needed resources and enrichment to the school. We cannot do this work with you. Special mention goes to the incredible Executive Board. They are undoubtedly one of the most hard-working, committed, and dedicated groups of people with whom we have worked, and our PTA success rests heavily on their efforts.

That being said, the PTA is not the endeavor of a small group of people; it is the collective body of us all. We could not have achieved all that we have without each and every one of you. We look forward to the remaining months of the school year together and hope you will continue to join us in making 2017 another successful year at Q300!

With gratitude,

Maria Hantzopoulos and Andrea Tappert, Co-Presidents of the PTA

Congratulations, Principal Bill!



Congratulations to Principal Bill Biniaris on his appointment as permanent Principal for Q300! To mark the occasion we asked Bill to reintroduce himself in terms of the school's core values of inclusion, inquiry, and responsibility. To learn more about Bill, please see his feature in the June 2016 issue at q300pta.org.

Inclusion

Bill earned a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from St. John's University, Master of Science in Adolescence Education from Mercy College and an Advanced Certificate in School and District Leadership from CUNY's Hunter College. After working as an internal auditor for several years, Bill became a teacher in order to fulfill his life-long passion for sharing knowledge and shaping the lives of young people. His journey eventually took him through the halls of the Academy for the Intellectually Gifted at PS 122 where his current love for gifted education was cultivated and reinforced by others. He strongly feels that all children possess unique gifts and that a highly effective school strives to discover those gifts, helps students recognize and actualize them, and sets them off on life long adventures that will always preserve the spark for a love of learning.

Inquiry

In addition to his many other passions, Bill has always loved hiking and cycling. He also enjoys learning about the mysterious ways that different living things interact with each other. He has hiked the Grand Canyon twice, the Vikos Gorge in northern Greece, several trails in Cappadocia, Turkey, and has attempted to summit Mt. Washington on several occasions, including as recently as this month. He hopes to hike the entire Appalachian Trail someday. One of his favorite books is *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson.

Responsibility

With a couple of brief exceptions, Bill has lived in Astoria his entire life. He is the product of local public schools and is committed to paying forward the special gift his teachers gave him as a young student. Bill knows that he can play a small role in shaping the world by ensuring that highly able students are exposed to a unique learning environment where both their hearts and minds are challenged.

Upcoming News & Events

2/24–3/19 New York International Children's Film Festival, showcasing the best new films for children ages 3-18. Q300 earns \$3 back for every ticket you purchase! Go to <http://nyicff.org/tickets/> and select our school from the "Select My School" menu on the top of the page.

3/3 Family Movie Night! 5:30 pm at the PS 17 campus. We will show **Pete's Dragon**. Admission is free, though there will be popcorn, pizza, snacks and drinks available for purchase. All proceeds are split between the two schools' PTAs.

3/9 Parent-Teacher Conferences Elementary School, and **Pizzeria Uno's Doughraiser**.

3/16 Parent-Teacher Conferences Middle School, and **Pizzeria Uno's Doughraiser**.

3/24 Annual Zumbathon 5:30 pm at the PS 17 campus. **Save the date** and get ready to move at our second annual Zumbathon! Information coming soon on how you can participate and help us raise money (even if you do not like to dance!).

3/30 or 3/31 PTA General Meeting at PS17 campus, 6:00 pm. Date TBD.

4/10 – 4/18 Spring Break. School is closed.

5/7 Save the date for our **Stepping into Summer Dance Party and Auction** 3-6 pm at the Chian Federation in Astoria. Consider donating prizes for auction, helping to get sponsors for the Auction Journal, or joining the committee. Email auction@q300pta.org for more information.

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We welcome your contributions, if you have article ideas or photos for the next newsletter contact Amanda Spielman at communications@q300pta.org.