



# Newsletter

30th Avenue School – Inclusion. Inquiry. Responsibility.

## APRIL 2020 ISSUE

Less than seven weeks ago, the Q300 PTA was contemplating a very different newsletter. Then came "New York State on PAUSE" and we wondered if we would have anything to share due to Q300 event cancellations and postponements. As we looked around, though, we found stories of generosity, kindness, and hope. So while this wasn't the issue we had planned, it is the issue that shows how Q300 students, families, teachers, and community partners embody the school's spirit of "Inclusion. Inquiry. Responsibility.", even in uncertain times.

Continue reading below to see how families have been celebrating joyous occasions and quiet moments. Learn what 2nd grade teacher Leanne Bolson hopes her students will take away from this time and how 8th grade teachers and students are preparing for high school. Join after-school activities offered by Global Kids, find out how the Chess Team has been sharpening its skills, and get inspired by parents who created a virtual learning community. See how you can join Q300 in supporting hospital personnel and local restaurants, and join us in thanking those who are working on the front lines of this pandemic.

### **Thank You to Our Essential Workers!**

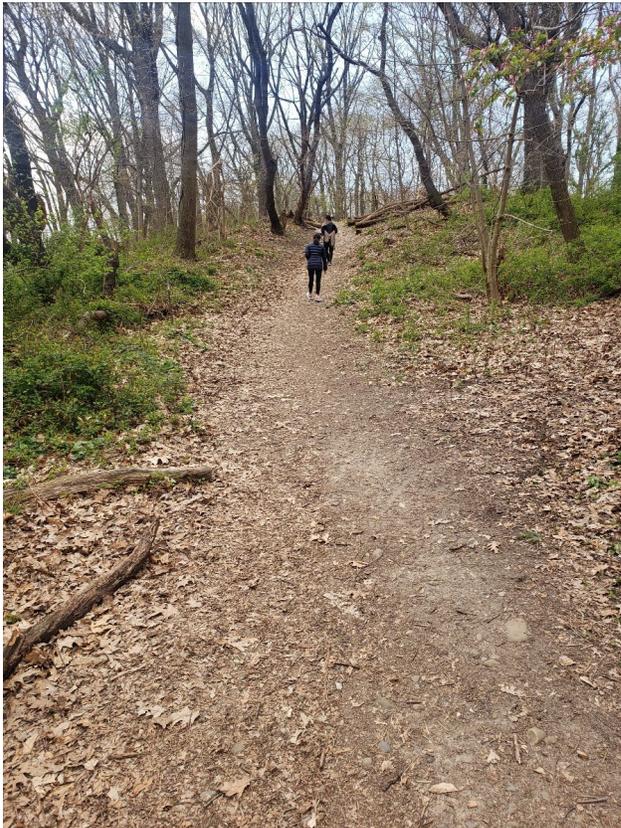
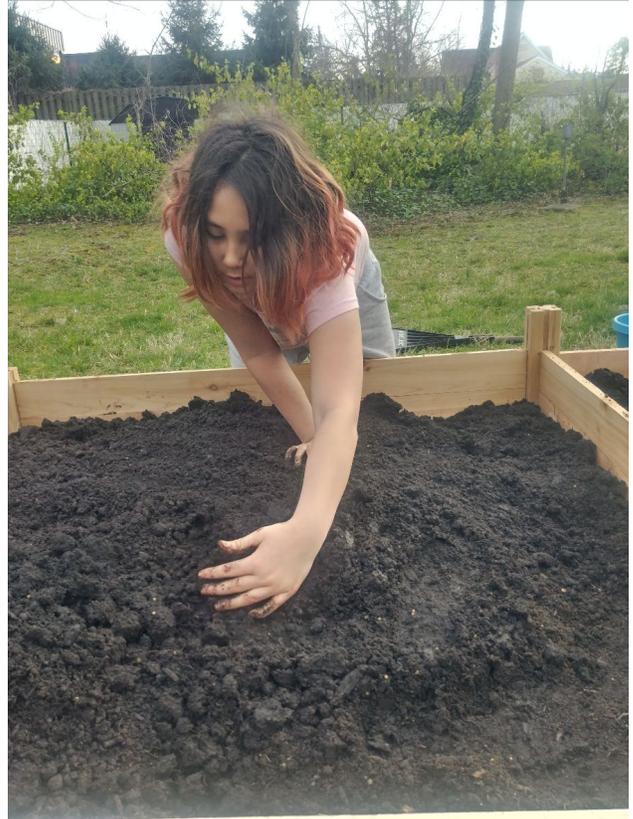
Thank you to all of you working on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our heartfelt thanks to:

Our health care workers, health care suppliers, health care distribution centers, truck drivers, restaurant staff, cleaning staff, warehouse workers and suppliers, distribution companies, manufacturers, factory workers, car and bike delivery services, news crews, public transportation workers, tele-health workers, all officers in uniform, military, pharmacy staff, vets, grocery staff, teachers, child care providers, electricians, plumbers, energy workers, gas stations, mechanics, IT workers, sanitation workers, and many, many more.

## Celebrating Birthdays, Babies, and Quiet Moments

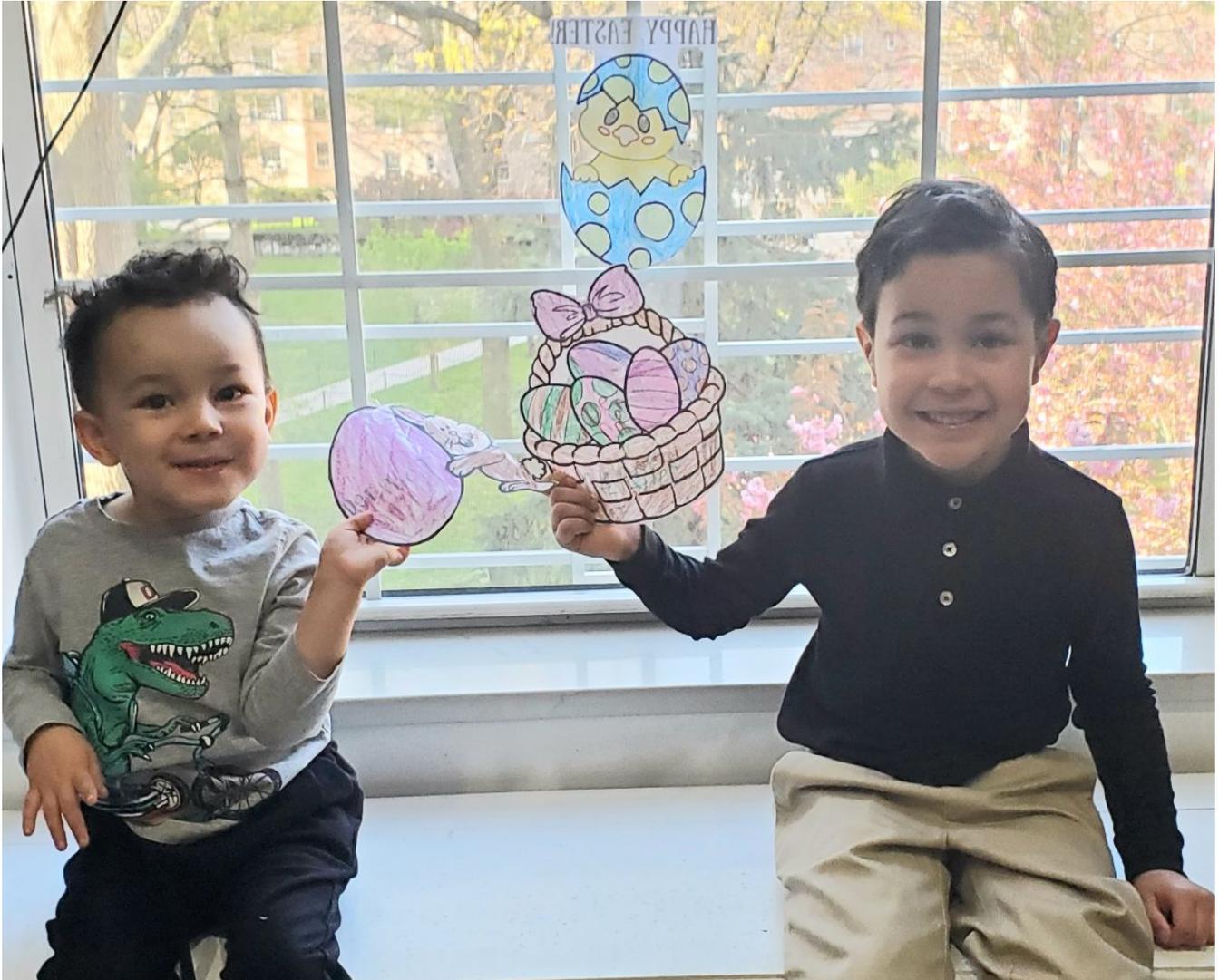


Clockwise from top: Westley (4th grade) celebrating his birthday with sister Abby (5th grade); Lila's (1st grade) virtual birthday party; Darius (2nd grade) receiving a rowdy rendition of "Happy Birthday".



Clockwise from top:  
Sofia (1st grade) becoming a big sister to Lucas Daniel; Artemis (4th grade) setting up a backyard vegetable garden while sheltering in place in NJ; Celine (5th grade) on a social distance hike in Forest Park.

## Q300 Stories from Home



Above: Dermot (right), with his brother Seamus during their Easter Egg Hunt.

### **Dermot (Kindergarten)**

Kindergarten parent Heather helped organize a socially distant Easter Egg Hunt for her sons Dermot and Seamus (baby brother) in their Astoria co-op. Co-op management printed out pictures of Easter eggs that co-op members colored and placed on their windows for the hunt. Some members reported finding as many as 244 eggs during their Easter Egg Hunt Walks!

### **Loic (3rd grade)**

I have been going to one of the regional enrichment centers because my parents have to go to work. It has been amazing because it is fun and has lots of activities like art, music, and wilderness survival skills classes, and I don't have to hear my parents nagging me to do my classwork all the time. The staff keeps us safe by making sure we keep our distance from other kids and wash our hands often.

### **Olivia (5th grade)**

The coronavirus pandemic has affected our lives in many different ways. Children and their families have to stay home, and school has to be conducted online. There have been many changes to people's normal daily routines. My daily routine has changed a lot during this period as well. Before, when school was still open, I would go to sleep at 9 p.m. and wake up at 6 a.m., but now I can go to sleep and wake up later. Many would see this as a benefit, but I would much rather keep to my original schedule and attend school like I used to. On a typical spring weekend, when it would be a nice, sunny day to do some outdoor activities with my family, it is now not possible because of the quarantine. This is definitely something that has taken time to adjust to and has not been easy.

I am looking forward to the day that everything gets back to normal and I can see my friends and teachers in school. Although times are very difficult at the moment, there will be good times in the future.

### **Ingrid Bromberg Kennedy, parent of new blogger Lila (5th grade)**

The first week kids had to stay home from school, before the Q300 distance learning started, Lila and I created a schedule for her based on her 5th grade classes. She had been taking the journalism elective during lunch on Wednesdays, and therefore decided to write a blog in its place. Lila wanted to recreate a newspaper, reporting on issues of the day, reviewing movies and books, and publishing puzzles.

She asked two newspaper reporters that she knew for writing tips. A Q300 parent talked with Lila about ways to interview someone that allows them to speak openly, and strategies for easily organizing interview notes. Lila's uncle gave her advice on writing reviews, including how much of a plot you should give away, and the importance of a good headline. Lila has been publishing an article once a week, and so far she has reviewed a book and two movies, created a puzzle, and reported on how kids are coping with being at home and what kids think about remote learning.



### **Excerpt from Lila's post "What's it like being stuck at home?" from her blog By Kid For Kids:**

We are all stuck at home, whether we like it or not. Everywhere around the world, schools are closing and people are being ordered to stay at home. Being at home all the time, with everyone in your family there with you, can lead to unique situations. I interviewed some people from New York, California, and even India to see what they think.

It can be annoying to be stuck at home with your family 24/7. Families can easily get into fights or arguments when they're together all day long. ... Some are silly disagreements that happen just because families are fed up with each other, and some just normal arguments. "They tend to be silly arguments. For instance, my wife and I had an argument about how to make whipped cream the other night," says Mark Lewis, who lives in California with his wife and son.

To read the rest of this blog post or other posts from Lila's blog By Kid For Kids, visit [bykidforkids.blogspot.com](http://bykidforkids.blogspot.com).

## What It Means to Teach During "New York State on PAUSE"

*Interview by Fiona Yung*



**Leanne Bolson**, teacher for Class 202, tells us about her aspirations for her students, some advantages she has seen to remote learning, and what she has been doing during “New York State on PAUSE.”

### **What motivates you as a teacher, especially during these uncertain times?**

There are a ton of reasons why I became a teacher, but the number one reason would be that I love working with children. I think they are brilliant. They are all different, with diverse personalities and possibilities. As teachers, we have the privilege of helping them mold themselves into individuals ready for the world. Now more than ever, I think they need strong role models who will be there for them in times of uncertainty. The time we are currently living through is unprecedented and I am more motivated than ever to make sure our kids continue to get the high-quality education they deserve, not only academically, but socially and emotionally as well.

### **What challenges have you found transitioning to remote teaching? What are some advantages to remote teaching?**

One of the biggest challenges for me was how quickly everything progressed and not getting the chance to talk to my students about the transition before it happened. Luckily, remote learning has given me an outlet to still communicate with everyone and show them that I am still here for them. I do miss the regular contact and the bond that comes with human interaction, but we’ve found ways to still connect and stay strong as a classroom community. I think as teachers we are all still learning and working out the kinks, but each week seems to flow a little bit better than the last.

Technology is truly an amazing thing and our school is so lucky to have the resources it does during this time. I have seen students take their creativity to new levels using different apps, videos, audio recording, and writing platforms. Since assignments are being done at home, I am also getting a different point of view about students' family lives and learning new information that I didn't know before, such as younger siblings, pets, and hobbies students have.

**What would you like your students to take away from this time at home?**

Although this is an uncertain time for all of us, especially children, I want students to feel that the Q300 school community still stands strong. We will keep learning and will be there for one another no matter what is thrown our way. I also think this is a great opportunity for students to get to know themselves in a way they might not experience during a typical school day. Working independently at home pushes students to try different strategies on their own to find what works for them. We are working on putting out material that really plays off of student choice and individuality. Students can choose how to present their work in a way that is meaningful to them. The use of remote learning is also teaching a lot of flexibility and squashing that “one size fits all” approach. Students can see that there is more than one “right way” to do something.

**How have you been spending your time during "New York State on PAUSE"?**

I have been doing a lot of cooking! I've always liked to cook, but given the extra time (and inspiration from one of my students who started a food blog), I've been really going out of my comfort zone to try new recipes and challenge myself a bit in that area. Before the PAUSE, I loved going to workout classes, so I've been trying to stay active and healthy by doing yoga and some other exercise programs at home. I also have had time to finish some books I've been meaning to read and jump back into some books that I've missed. I recently finished an Anthony Bourdain book and jumped back into the Harry Potter series after seeing that many of my students are reading that as well. One of my favorite things to do is to keep in touch with family and friends, so I make sure to carve out time to call, FaceTime or Zoom all the people I love and care about!

## Teacher Voices: Preparing 8th Graders for High School During a Pandemic

Interview by Amy Ho



Photos: Class 802 (top) and Class 801 (bottom) with their Survival Kits.

The following Q&A features **Laura Parris**, **Anna Hauser** and **Chidi Amasiani**. Anna and Laura are the 8th grade co-advisors and have been working with the 8th grade class on high school applications and other senior / graduation activities. In addition, they are also homeroom teachers to the two 8th grade classes and teach math and English respectively. Chidi is Q300's 8th grade ICT teacher for all core subject classes. Below, they share their thoughts on high school preparedness in a time of crisis.

**Against the backdrop of a pandemic and remote learning, what is your primary focus for preparing your students for high school?**

**Laura Parris:** As I spend my final three months teaching this graduating 8th grade class in a remote learning setting, my primary focus is on maintaining as much normalcy as possible while simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, acknowledging that this situation is completely not normal.

This means that learning is still happening, just in unique and creative ways. Not only do the 8th graders need to continue learning so that they are prepared to enter high school with the prerequisite skills and knowledge, but they want to learn. Their desire to learn has been evident all year, but perhaps now more so than ever, many of the students are craving structure, routines, and stability within and despite the uncertainty surrounding all of us during this time. ELA class has continued and will continue, as books are one of the few things that can help us all escape from the present reality.

Some lessons and activities naturally have to look different to adapt to remote learning, but I have tried to empower the 8th graders to have a voice in their own education. If something isn't working for them, I encourage them to speak up. If they have an idea, I welcome their suggestion. This remote learning time is also testing the 8th graders' sense of independence and time management skills, both of which will serve the students well as they move on to high school. Until that time, I'll continue to teach and the 8th graders will continue to learn, but this pandemic and remote learning situation has highlighted the internal strength, drive, and motivation already present within this class of 2020. They are making the best out of their remaining time at Q300, and I have all the faith and confidence in their continued success as soon-to-be high schoolers.

**Anna Hauser:** At the very beginning of the year, Laura, Chidi and I made “Senior Year Survival Kits” for our 8th graders, which included, among other things, Life Savers candies (for some lifesaving "encourage-mint" during the tough days), a Kit Kat (for whenever you need a break), a paperclip (for when you need help keeping it together), and a rubber band (to remind you to be flexible). Little did we know how much we would all need to embody each of those qualities and more as the year went on.

My favorite grade to teach is 8th grade, not just because I love to teach Algebra 1 and to work on the yearbook, but because it is such a year of growth for our students. Against the backdrop of a pandemic and remote learning, my two main goals for preparing our 8th grade students for high school are to give students something interesting and mathematical to think about and to continue to make connections with my students. Part of being an 8th grade teacher is allowing students to be independent. They will make mistakes, but not matter what, we will always let them know that we will be there to support, encourage, and guide them.

Our group of 8th graders this year is going to have a year to remember, and even more than the math that we do together, I hope they take away the silly memories, the laughter and the memories that we have made and are continuing to make remotely. The class of 2020 will always have a special place in our hearts and I know that they will accomplish so much this year by working together. Just like the puzzle piece that was included in each of their survival kits – which, when put together created a picture of a hot air balloon – each 8th grader’s contribution to their class will allow all of them to soar to great heights.

**Chidi Amasiani:** The 8th graders have worked so hard this year to get to where they are. I am proud of how far they have come and I know they are excited to begin new chapters of their lives. The primary focus right now is ensuring students continue to master all the necessary skills needed to begin their high school journey. In addition to academic skills, self-advocacy, time management, and organization are equally important, and remote learning has enlightened both teachers and students on just how valuable these skills are. Working alongside my co-teachers, my hope is that our students will leave Q300 knowing they are well-prepared to face anything.

## **Student Voices: Remote Learning and Making the Most of 8th Grade**

*Below are some 8th grade student responses to the following question: How are you making the most of the rest of your 8th grade / Q300 experience given this unique remote learning situation?*

**Adam (802):** As public schools are most likely canceled through the rest of the school year, the chance of us eighth graders having a proper graduation, senior trip, graduation party, field day, and last day of school gathering are slimmer than they have ever been. These events would have acted as a final salute to our middle school and eighth grade lives and our move to our high school and 9th grade futures, and without these events, it is especially difficult to make the most of our experience at this school and in this grade. We will never again see our teachers and peers face-to-face or be taught, let alone sit, in a classroom - necessary factors to any learning environment until recently. Through remote learning, we can have as close to a school life as possible while remaining quarantined in our homes.

To make the most of the rest of my eighth grade/Q300 experience, I am trying to mimic what the future months would look like. For example, I am staying on a relatively similar schedule, going to sleep and waking up at around the same times, starting my work at the same time and eating my meals at the same time. While I am not very social, I email my teachers if I have any questions and stay connected to friends by texting on group chats. In addition, recently, our grade (students and teachers) has been discussing to see if there is a way to have a proper graduation and other important events when it is safe to reconvene in the future. In terms of assignments, the workload has not drastically changed between pre-quarantine and during quarantine, and has been balanced ever since, so it is easier to create a consistent schedule that works best for me. Furthermore, at the time that I am writing this sentence, I am finalizing what my custom pages of the yearbook would look like, which gives me an opportunity to go back and remember all of the experiences that I have had as a Q300 student.

**Domenic (801):** Because we are shut inside for the rest of the school year due to the coronavirus, things for the eighth grade at Q300 are much different than when we were in school. It affects every single one of us. However, with all this happening and school being shut down, school online is much more relaxed and things aren't as hard through remote learning as I expected them to be. I am trying my hardest to do all my assignments in the morning and turn them in before the due date so I can do other things in the afternoon. What I'm trying to get out of this is a balance between work, other assignments outside of school, and freedom to do as I please, so I can ultimately still get a lot out of just one day even though I'm not in school. So far, it has been pretty helpful because I am able to get credit through online learning but not be so stressed about it as I would be with actual school. I hope this process will continue to help me for the rest of the 2019-20 school year and to keep my grades up so I can enter high school with much knowledge, even though eighth grade is not the same anymore this year. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

**Nicholas (801):** During the first few weeks of remote learning, I am finding all the work to be balanced, but a little harder to understand without asking questions face-to-face. The teachers are providing the best work that they can provide during remote learning. When I finish my work, I spend most of my time playing music, reading or catching up on old work. This has given me the opportunity to explore new things about each subject and about the world. However, since we probably won't be able to go back to school for the rest of the year, lately I have been talking to my friends more to see how they are doing and so we can play games with one another. Remote learning has given me chances to change how I work and what I can do to improve my skills in each subject.

## Can't Stop, Won't Stop: Global Kids Go Remote

Written by Andrea Canova, Program Manager, Global Kids



Above: Global Kids staff dressed up for Superhero/Costume Day.

Q300 middle school students may participate in Global Kids, an after-school program that develops youth leaders through dynamic global education and leadership development. The program is daily and free for 6th through 8th grade and funded by the Department of Youth & Community Development's Schools Out New York City (SONYC) initiative.

Global Kids (GK) has been committed to continuing its after-school programming for Q300 middle school students since the pandemic closed New York City public schools. Through GK Online, students can participate on GK's online Ning social platform and join live Google Hangouts video chat sessions Monday through Friday afternoons. On GK Ning, kids can participate on their own or with their families in weekly cooking, dance, DIY/STEM, and art challenges. Other activities include daily meditations, riddles, and photography challenges.

The live program changes each day, with workshops in Leadership, Peacekeepers, Digital Learning, Art, and Right to Play, as well as daily dedicated homework time. In addition, clubs include Funny Girls, Census Squad, and Astoria Film Festival Club. The Census Squad is continuing its community outreach through videos, census meme creation, and other digitally innovative methods. In Funny Girls club, students use improv to laugh and learn valuable leadership skills such as collaboration, empathy, resiliency, self-awareness, and agility. Finally, GK Online has been working with the Astoria Film Fest crew to contribute to their COVID Days documentary. Students have been creating videos, artwork, photos, and more, which GK will be submitting for inclusion in the documentary. All of these activities are an extension of GK's regular school year programming to retain a sense of normalcy and provide a way for students to express themselves during these times in creative ways.

Finally, in light of Spring Break being cancelled, GK created its own GK Spirit Week Spring Break! Each day was built around a theme, including a Game Day black-tie event, Superhero/Costume Day, Music Madness, PJ/Movie Day, and Around the World/Global Day!

## Chess Team Beats Social Isolation

Written by Fiona Yung



Clockwise from top left: Eli (3rd grade), Nathan (2nd grade), Reuben (kindergarten), and Wailea (3rd grade) and Moana (kindergarten).



Left: Scarlett (kindergarten) goes straight from biking to chess. Right: Vincent (2nd grade), ready for the tournament.

*The Q300 Chess Team (Q3CT) was launched during the 2017-18 school year by Q300 parents to give students a space to become better chess players, decision makers, and creative thinkers as well as gain introspection, real-world experience, and maturity. All students, from beginners to experienced tournament players, are welcome to join Q3CT. To learn more information about Q3CT or to join, please visit [www.q300chess.com/join-us](http://www.q300chess.com/join-us).*

It's only been a little over a month and a half since New York City public schools moved to online learning, but the Q300 Chess Team (Q3CT) has already engaged in over 90 remote chess lessons, 30 practice tournaments, and 6 online citywide tournaments! Students in Q3CT continue to ramp up their chess skills despite physical isolation through programming designed and led by Q300 parents in partnership with NYChessKids, an organization that provides chess programming through schools and camps.

Q3CT and NYChessKids, which also runs a Q300 after-school program and a PTA-sponsored program for kindergarten and first-graders, have filled a gaping hole for Q300 chess enthusiasts and beginners alike. After learning about the cancellation of the March 2020 Saratoga State Tournament just three days before the team was set to travel and compete, Q3CT parent leads jumped into action. A weekend-long series of events was created to alleviate students' disappointment, with remote lessons by International Master and NYChessKids founder/owner Saudin Robovic, 30 simultaneous games against Sergey Shchukin, Q300 parent and a National Master, and the first ever online team battle between the Q300 and TAG Young Scholars chess teams. That same weekend, when the announcement was made about school closures, Q3CT parent leads and NYChessKids immediately extended the weekend's events into a weekly calendar of free lessons, practice tournaments, and online scholastic team battles.

On April 26th, Q3CT and NYChessKids hosted the first ever Q300 "virtual" home tournament. One hundred and eighteen students, parents, and even grandparents from 20 different New York City schools came together and played against one another. To emulate the feeling of a real-life scholastic event, the tournament featured a curated "tournament hall" Zoom conference, where participants could drop by to ask questions, go over games, and even socialize over chat. See the final tournament results and the success Q3CT had in the tournament.

When asked about their success in bringing chess to students during isolation, Mark Schroffner, one of the Q3CT parent leads, praised the time and dedication of fellow parents. "It's just a phenomenal parent group that has anchored this effort," Mark said. "Earlier parent leads included Luke Lukose, Carol Varikos, Donna Schroffner, and me. More recently, Sergey Shchukin and Ian Koh have been catalysts of Q3CT's growth. Sergey, in particular, has been a parent MVP through the COVID-19 climate. Sergey is a scholastic champion himself, and his passion has driven the events with Saudin via online chess. They have an awesome chess connection. This is so much effort, but at times, feels effortless."

Mark and Sergey were also quick to highlight Q3CT's partnership with NYChessKids. "Q3CT is powered by a special partnership between Q3CT parent leads and the generosity and expertise of Saudin," said Mark. Sergey added, "Saudin has doubled down on his work with Q300 students during COVID-19, providing three online group lessons every weekday through Zoom, giving play-by-play commentary on every tournament, and working tirelessly with parent leads to organize virtual events that have connected Q3CT students together on a daily basis to learn and have fun. He is dedicated and selfless, and he loves the Q300 kids."



**Zoe (third grade) excited for her tournament battle.**

Through the dedication of a number of parent volunteers and Saudin's hard work and passion for teaching chess, Q3CT shows no signs of slowing down!

**Q300 Responds to COVID-19: Embodying Our Core Values**  
**Q300 and P.S. 17 Team Up to Help Local Restaurants and Hospital Personnel**

*Written by Maria Hantzopoulos*



Top row: Delivery to Mt. Sinai. Bottom row: Food from Eat Offbeat.

Queens Feeds Hospitals is a grassroots, community-run initiative started with a simple idea in the time of COVID-19: Nourish healthcare clinicians who are working under tremendous strain, and support our local restaurants who are struggling to survive. They are connecting donors to vetted local restaurants to provide quality meals for shifts of healthcare workers at local hospitals, currently delivering to staff at Elmhurst Hospital and Mt. Sinai Queens while working toward scaling to other area hospitals. For \$1,000, a group or individual can feed a shift of heroic hospital staff who are working non-stop.

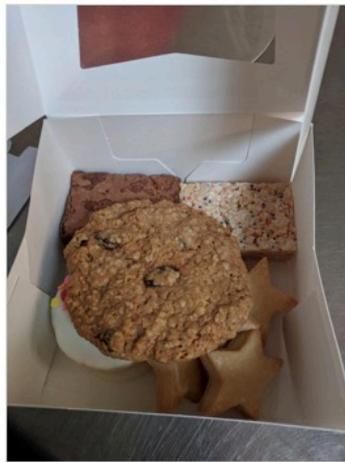
Q300 and P.S. 17 parents, who normally team up for the Zumbathon, decided this year to pivot and support this initiative. We raised close to \$2,500! Our first meal was delivered to Mt. Sinai on April 14th, where the food was provided by Eat Offbeat, a catering company that supports refugees as well. Our second meal was also delivered to Mt. Sinai and sponsored by Dino's Pizzeria. With the support of local boutique store Brass Owl, a third meal provided by Bareburger (owned by a former Q300 family) will be delivered to Mt. Sinai again. Thank you to all the parents, teachers, and community members of Q300 and P.S. 17!

## Care Packages for Caregivers: From Queens to the Bronx

Written by Maria Hantzopoulos



Clockwise from top: St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx; treats from Betty Bakery; Zeke Mandel, Q300 parent and owner of Betty Bakery, with care packages for St. Barnabas workers.

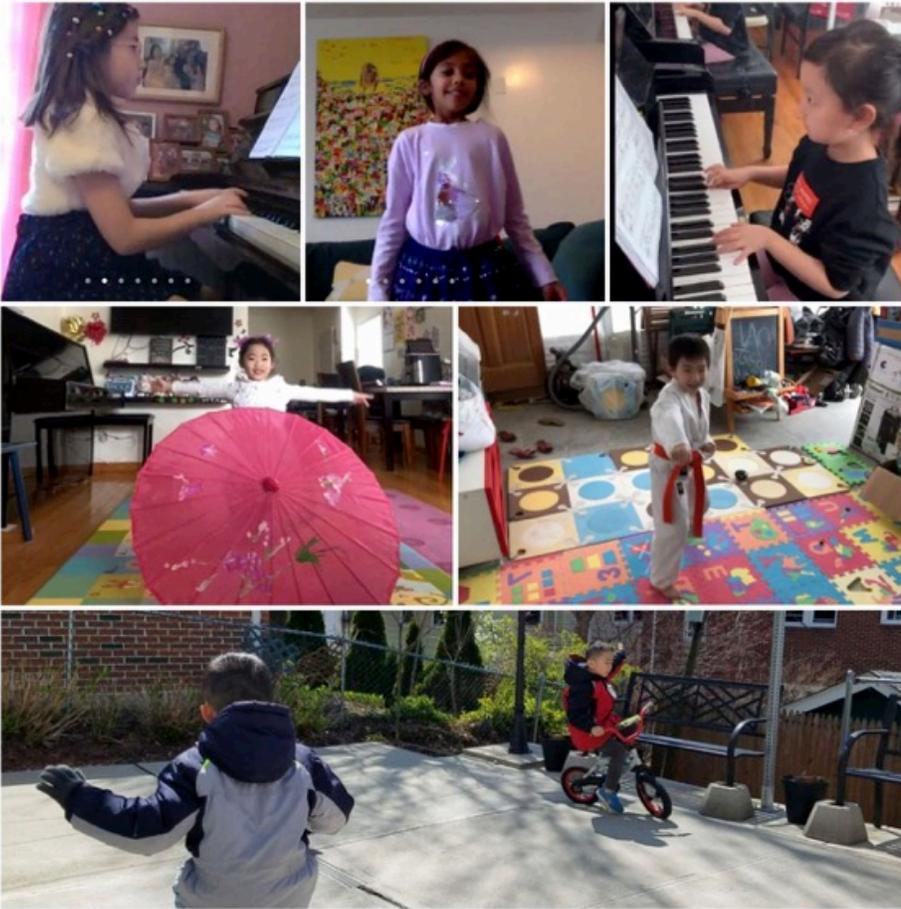


In mid-March, Erik Marketan, Q300 parent and a Trauma Injury Prevention specialist who works out of SBH Health System/St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx, reached out to fellow Q300 parent Maria Hantzopoulos, to figure out ways to support some of his co-workers and team members on the front lines who had been exposed, sick and were hospitalized due to COVID-19. He had already lost one beloved colleague at that point, and was trying to think of ways to support the others who were in recovery. After several phone meetings and texts, they decided the best way to support them was to provide care packages to them for when they were released. They immediately set up a GoFundMe to launch the project. The next step was to work with a local business to provide the treats, and in came another Q300 parent, Zeke Mandel, owner of the renowned Betty Bakery!

Many Q300 families have joined the effort to send Get Well baskets to those that are offline in this fight at St. Barnabas. The baskets contain brownies, cookies, and other tasty treats from Betty Bakery, and we may soon be adding pies to the mix! The treats may be enjoyed by hospital staff and their families as they reunite and return to the front lines. Each care package costs approximately \$20 and are being delivered two or three times a week. So far, we've raised over \$2,000, and completed our first delivery of 25 care packages on April 7! In some ways, this was truly a full-circle Q300 initiative. Thank you to all the families who have given in this time of need. If you would like to donate, please do so here ([https://www.gofundme.com/f/care-packages-for-care-givers?utm\\_source=customer&utm\\_medium=copy\\_link-tip&utm\\_campaign=p\\_cp+share-sheet](https://www.gofundme.com/f/care-packages-for-care-givers?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link-tip&utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet)).

## First Grade "Zooms" Ahead to Close the (Social) Distance

Written by Amy Ho



Above: First graders showing off their skills in the virtual Talent Show.

Thank you to all the parents of the school who have proactively organized video conferences for our Q300 students to socialize and catch up. Many grades have had at least one or two socials so far. A special call out and a big “thank you” especially to Ian Koh for pulling together a video conference group for the first grade as soon as remote learning was announced, before remote learning even began. He not only organized the sessions, but he also taught many of the "lessons" himself!

These informal sessions have been a great way for the kids to do group learning and, more importantly, a way for them to see each other daily as many of our children are missing their classmates. Thank you also to other first grade parents such as Tomonori Nagano, Subhash Presha, Rongrong Ma, Patrick Resing, Herman Chen, Rachana Shah, James Huang, Monica Moscoso, and Amy Ho who stepped up to the plate to help out in different ways, including "teaching" different subjects. The group has covered an array of topics from kinetic energy and Cartesian coordinates to world languages and Earth Day.

Perhaps the highlight of April was the virtual Talent Show, with fourteen first graders showing off their skills in singing, dancing, piano, violin, artwork, cycling, and even skiing and swimming! We appreciate the time and effort that all the parents have dedicated to remote learning and the great sense of community and kindness that's reflective of Q300's culture.