

# QCC STEP

## Alumni Newsletter



SPRING 2023

### Introducing our first alumni newsletter

*Dr. Simran Kaur & Dr. Joan Petersen*  
*QCC-STEP Faculty Liaisons*

Dear STEP students, parents, staff and alumni,

We are proud to introduce our first QCC STEP Alumni newsletter. Our goal is to connect past and present QCC-STEP participants with each other to strengthen the ties among our extended STEP family.

STEP was initiated at QCC in 2006 by Drs. Kaur and Petersen, and has grown, evolved and changed throughout the years. However, a few things have remained constant- the presence of dedicated, persistent students who are willing to give up their Saturdays to attend a program that helps them strengthen their math and science skills, and the dedicated instructors and staff who are there to support them.

We have been contacting our graduates and staff who have been involved with the program throughout the years to find out what they have been doing in their post QCC-STEP years. Our first newsletter will feature an alumni profile of one of our first graduates, Karen Mason.

Fall 2022 marks QCC-STEP's return to some in-person instruction after a long gap due to COVID. Being together on campus will help strengthen connections among current STEP attendees. It is our hope that learning about the history of QCC-STEP and getting to know some of our alumni will enhance our QCC-STEP community even further.

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Karen Mason*

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QCC-STEP*

"Education is for improving the lives of others, and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."

- Marian Wright Edelman



# Alumni Profile- Karen Mason

*What follows is Karen's profile in her own words.*

I joined the STEP program my sophomore year of high school (2006) after one of the teachers at my high school (Martin van Buren) mentioned the program to my class. I was curious to see what it was about. I participated in STEP for three years.

At first, I questioned myself why I was going to classes on a Saturday. However, even more than ten years later I believe that it was one of the best programs I've ever taken part in. I was able to experience an educational system that encouraged students to succeed, and offered exceedingly more than what was available in my regular high school classroom. My favorite memory of my time with STEP was doing research with my mentors (Drs. Kaur and Petersen) and my presentations at the STEP annual statewide conference in Albany, NY.



After graduating from high school (and QCC-STEP), I attended New England College in New Hampshire. I graduated in 2013 with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology.

My whole life I have always wanted to work in the Healthcare field. In my first two years after college, I worked as a technician with New York Health and Hospitals Bellevue. I was working inside the operating rooms at a level one trauma hospital. This experience definitely taught me the value of life and the importance of time. In my third year I was promoted to an account supervisor, and given my own hospital team. I currently oversee four departments including the Operating room, Central Sterile, Endoscopy and Bronchoscopy.

During my second year as account supervisor, the pandemic hit. Inside my hospital, all elective cases were cancelled and things got really challenging for some months. It definitely got a little bit frightening, but when the army and air force stepped in, they truly kept my hospital from collapsing as we are inside one of the heaviest hit communities in all of New York. I truly hope that this part of history will never repeat itself. Recently, I've accepted a new position as a Manager with the Mount Sinai Health System and I am looking forward to a new challenge and new experiences.

The STEP program truly played a large part in my life. They were like a family that encouraged my success inside the classroom. I also felt prepared for college thanks to the skills I gained from attending the STEP program. I would like to encourage the current QCC-STEP students to take part in research and explore opportunities that they wouldn't normally get to explore inside their regular classrooms.

I am currently living in Jersey City, and I just gave birth to my first child. I hope the STEP program will still be around for many more future generations.



Karen can be reached at [karenmason64@yahoo.com](mailto:karenmason64@yahoo.com)

# A Brief History of QCC- STEP

Drs. Kaur and Petersen applied for and received funding from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to begin the Science Technology Entry Program (STEP) at QCC in 2006. Although funding for STEP programs in New York State began in 1986, and QCC had already established a CSTEP program for its own students, there was no STEP program at QCC before this time. Our goal was to establish a program for pre-collegiate students to provide them the support they would need to succeed in high school, enroll in college, and pursue a career in a STEM field in the future.

In our first year, we started off with twenty 9<sup>th</sup> graders who attended Saturday enrichment workshops in Mathematics and Science. Over the years, the program has grown to include five science workshops and five math workshops, and to serve students in grades 7-12. QCC-STEP also added a college advisement component, a research program, and standardized test preparation. QCC-STEP students have had opportunities to attend field trips, regional conferences, and many other special events. They get to meet students from other middle and high schools, get exposure to college students and faculty, and establish a strong connection to their community college. Most recently, enrichment workshops in data science, 3-D printing and other special topics have been added to QCC-STEP offerings.

Currently, QCC-STEP is funded to support 104 students.



Several of our alumni have pursued careers in STEM and the licensed professions, and many maintain a close connection with the program. In future newsletters you will learn more about our STEP alumni and other milestones of the program.