

Gigi's Playhouse
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
www.gigisplayhouse.com

GIGI'S NEWS

Serving two locations

Loving a child with Down syndrome is contagious... Help us spread the love!!

Hoffman Estates
 1069 W Golf Rd • Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
 847-885-PLAY • www.gigisplayhouse.com

Plainfield
 10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D • Plainfield, IL 60585
 630-778-PLAY • www.gigisplayhousetoo.com

November 2006



Can you say PARTY???

Hundreds came out to celebrate our 3 year anniversary! What a party! People came from Wisconsin, Colorado, Indiana—even the Illinois people traveled from as far as Champaign and Manhattan, IL—and it was all to be a part of the magic that this incredible celebration brings. The look of pride on everyone's face as we celebrated our lives with Down syndrome was amazing! The strength we get from each other is something no one can teach us. We are all brought together by one common bond and we have so much to learn from each other.

Some of you may not realize this, but Gigi's Playhouse has turned into a "House of Hope" for families across the country. Just knowing there is a place for us to celebrate our lives with Down syndrome gives them a great sense of pride. So even as you are just sitting there today reading this newsletter a family somewhere is finding strength from our message. Thank you to all of you! Without all of you this message of "hope" would not be able to reach so many people.



Thank you Com Ed and United Way!!

Every year Com Ed encourages their employees to get involved with the community. This year they have chosen Gigi's Playhouse as the recipient in their United Way giving program. We will be represented at their annual gathering and everybody will learn about the tremendous potential in children with Down syndrome and all the special gifts they have to offer!

A Powerful Message in a Beautiful Package



"Loving a Child with Down Syndrome is contagious... Help us spread the love!" I couldn't think of a better motto to keep in mind as we work together to "spread" our calendars all over the world to let people know about the potential of children with Down syndrome and the love they bring to us and the lives of so many every day. The 2007 "BELIEVE" calendar has a powerful message that everyone can learn from and it is absolutely beautiful! Please don't just give someone the calendar, encourage people to read it—not just to themselves but to their children. The message is clear and wonderful.

As we enter this holiday season, let's reach out to everyone we encounter and encourage them to "BELIEVE" in our children and the impact our children will have on their community. The Gigi's Playhouse 2007 Down Syndrome Awareness calendar "BELIEVE" will help them do just that! YOU can help by purchasing calendars, selling calendars and promoting them. We can give you all the tools you need to help spread the LOVE! For every 100 calendars you sell you get 1 free Gigi's Playhouse \$100.00 raffle ticket!

PLEASE HELP US SPREAD THE LOVE!

Remember, with the exception of the printing costs every person involved in this calendar DONATED their time! Which means 100% of the profits go right back into Down syndrome awareness!

OUR MISSION: to increase awareness of Down syndrome by providing programming, support, and education.

HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION



Open Play is for everyone!

The whole gang hung out for pizza and fun!

Sharon came all the way from Florida



Melanie came for her first time



Daniel brought his Grandma



Max slept through the whole thing!

Every Thursday from 12:30–2:00 we hang out, eat pizza, make new friends and relax as the volunteers help with the kids!

Open MIKE Night!

Beginning in January, the second Friday of the month is open mike night for high school aged kids! Karaoke, jokes, whatever your talent is...let it shine! The first hour is open mike, then we start dancing!!!! We will have equal number of peers with Down syndrome as without. This will be a great way to let off some steam (and get some self esteem) and to make new friends!! Be ready to party!

Friday, January 12th from 7-9 OPEN MIKE NIGHT!

Please RSVP so we have enough snacks and pop.

Save the date!

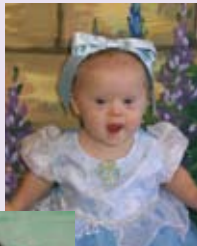
The Friday Friends (18 and up) annual bowling party is going to be on Friday December 15th.

Information to follow!



Say "Cheese"!!!

We are updating our front window!! As you know our windows are lined with all of the beautiful kids that visit GiGi's Playhouse! Many of you had your picture taken at the Anniversary party but for those of you who missed out please feel free to stop by and get your picture taken!



PIZZA AND ICE CREAM PARTY!

A Free fun filled afternoon!

The Hispanic play group and the Polish play group are kicking off the holiday season with pizza parties! Everyone is welcome! Make new friends, learn new things, eat some pizza and have some fun!!



Spanish speaking families meet Sunday, November 12th from 11-1.

Polish speaking families meet Sunday, November 26th from 1-3.



HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

November 2006



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 Support Group Meeting 7-10	2 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome!	2 Reserved 2-4	4 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00
5 Hispanic Open Play Group Pizza Party! 11:00 - 1:00	6 Literacy program 10:30 - 5:30	7 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30	8 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00	9 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome!	10 Reserved 2-4 Private party 7-9	11 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 2 & Under Group 10:00 - 12:00 HOP, SKIP & JUMPERS 12:00 - 1:30
12	13 Literacy program 10:30 - 5:30 PLANNING MEETING! ALL WELCOME! 7:00	14 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30	15 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00	16 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome!	17 Reserved 2-4	18 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 Leaps & Bounds 10:00 - 11:00
19 Polish Play Group Pizza Party! 1:00 - 3:00	20 Literacy program 10:30 - 5:30	21 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30	22 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00	23 Happy Thanksgiving	24 Reserved 2-4	25 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00
26	27 Literacy program 10:30 - 5:30	28 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00	29 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00	30 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome!		

Open Play-Every Thursday! Everyone is welcome! Stop by for pizza, pop and fun! We have volunteers to assist with the kids so the parents can hang out! It is awesome!!!

The literacy program- GiGi's Playhouse provides FREE private tutoring to children with Down syndrome. Customized materials are provided for each individual student. The program also assists teachers and parents on how to tutor their children.

"Future" Friday Friends- Ages 6-8 only. Kids create lasting friendships through facilitated interactive play, while promoting good social skills. Each session ends with a pizza dinner in which social skills and table manners will be encouraged.

Friday Friends- Ages 18 and up only. Party with the gang! Equal numbers of peers with Down syndrome as without. Karaoke, dances, laser tag, bowling, prom, movie nights, friends and fun!

2 and under group- Families with kids 2 and under get together to play, and have fun while the parents network with each other!

Hop, Skip and Jumpers- For 3-5 year olds, this program will help promote friendships, good social skills and interactive play through fun creative activities!

Hispanic Group- Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education.

Polish Play Group- Polish speaking families gather for an afternoon of fun and friendship.

Fall Birthday Party- If you were born in September, October or November or just love a good party come on by! The birthday child gets a gift and everyone gets a goodie bag.

Reserved- Playhouse may be reserved for private play groups, parties or support groups

The Playhouse can be reserved for any Down syndrome related event. When it is available it may also be used by other groups with special needs.

Everyone is welcome at GiGi's Playhouse!

Due to the need for scheduling volunteers and acquiring supplies, reservations are greatly appreciated.
(847) 885-PLAY, or you can e-mail nancy@gigisplayhouse.com. Feel free to leave a message!

Check the website for constant updates and to see pictures of the activities
www.gigisplayhouse.com!

GiGi's Playhouse is located 3 miles West of Woodfield Shopping Mall next to Schaumburg Toyota in the Brandess Center at
1069 W. Golf Road
Hoffman Estates IL, 60169
847-885-PLAY!

PLAINFIELD LOCATION



Learn to Read Program

The Learn to Read program is off to a great start. Thank you to our terrific tutors Wendy Siannas, Gwen Stephens, Rhonda Jorgeson and Nicole Dickerson. Our tutors are all teachers who donate their precious time to work with the 16 children in the program. We are in need of more tutors to work with the 13 other children on the waiting list. If you know of any teachers, retired teachers or student teachers please have them contact the Playhouse at 630-778-PLAY and leave a message for Melissa Cleary. If you would like to be added to our wait list you can also call Melissa Cleary at 630-778-PLAY.

Did you know?

GiGi's Playhouse Too is run completely by volunteers. Our newsletter, office work, planning, finances, and program leadership are all carried out by volunteers.



We need you! If you have an idea for a program please contact the Playhouse to express your thoughts— you are not obligated to be the program leader if you come up with an idea. Please also keep in mind that programs do not have to run weekly or monthly—it is up to the program leader. We have had numerous volunteers from our communities expressing interest in volunteering for us, so you won't be alone. Please let your aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and teachers know that they are welcome to get involved—we could use their help, too!

Let there be cool air!

If you have attended events at the Playhouse this summer you probably noticed it was a little warm. Relief is in sight. We will be getting an air conditioning unit installed soon. Thank you to Doug Collie for working hard on this project.

Thank You!

The Learn to Read program would like to send a HUGE thank you to Vince Ptaszek's Nana and Papa, Jo and Mike Lepore, for their generous donation.

LET'S GET READING!



NADS Conference

November 4, 2006
Donald E. Stephens Conference Center,
Rosemont, IL

New Sign Language Classes Starting this Month!

Intro to Sign Language - Come with your child to learn Sign Language. This class will meet on Nov 16th and 30th from 6-7 pm. All ages are welcome. For more information call Wendy at 630-423-4035.

Signing Time Group - Nov 10 from 4:30-5:30 pm, the Signing Time Play Group will meet. Learn sign language by signing along to the songs from the TV series (airs Sundays on Channel 11).



PLAINFIELD LOCATION

November 2006



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>**Literacy Program is a FREE Literacy Program for all ages (by appointment only, please call Melisa at 630-904-6960 or email cleary@wowway.com) <i>We are looking for tutors and students.</i></p>			1	2	3 Private Play Group 12-2pm Teen-Tastic 7-9pm	4 NADS Conference in Rosemont
5	6 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	7 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	8	9	10 Private Play Group 12-2pm Signing Time 4:30-5:30 pm	11 DS Support Group Meeting 10-12 am Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm
12	13 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	14 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	15	16 Intro to Sign Language 6-7 pm	17 Private Play Group 12-2pm	18 GiGi's Walkers 9-10am GiGi's Crawlers 10-11am <i>RSVP to 630-423-4035</i>
19	20 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	21 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	22	23 Happy Thanksgiving	24 Private Play Group 12-2pm	25
26 Hispanic Group 11am-1pm 	27 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	28 Literacy Program 3-6 <i>By appointment</i>	29	30 Intro to Sign Language 6-7 pm	<p>All Events are Free unless noted. *RSVP to 630-778-PLAY Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome</p>	

2 & under playgroup: Families with children 2 and under get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

3-5 year old playgroup: Families with children ages 3-5 get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

GiGi's Crawlers: This group focus' on crawling skills as well as fine motor skills, social interaction with peers in a semi-structured environment. Children need to be crawling and are accompanied by a parent/adult.

GiGi's Walkers: This group focus' on post walking skills, with their peers, to prepare children for school activities (balance beam, kicking, throwing, jumping, etc). Children need to be walking independently and are accompanied by a parent/adult.

Teen Tastic: This group usually meets the 4th Fri. of the month from 7-9pm. We order pizza for dinner and have lots of fun watching movies and playing games with each other. 6th-12th grades.

Hispanic Group: Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education.

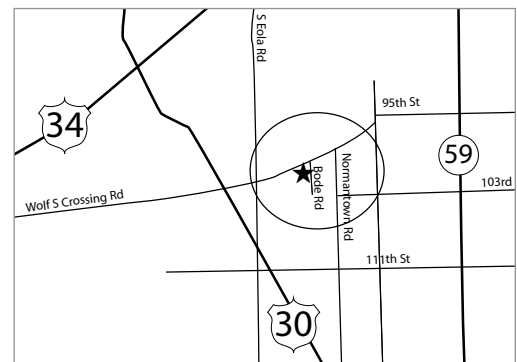
Intro to Sign Language: Come with your child to learn Sign Language. All ages are welcome.

Signing Time Group: Learn sign language by signing along to the songs from the TV series. All ages are welcome.

Daddy and Me: Dads get out with the kids and get together with other dads. All ages.

Birthday Party: All ages

10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D
Plainfield, IL 60585
630-778-PLAY (7529) • fax (630) 778-7519
www.gigisplayhousetoo.com



Thank you is never enough!

Here are just a few examples of things families have done to not only raise awareness but funds for GiGi's Playhouse!

The Giancola Family

When beloved Grandma Rose died, in lieu of flowers her friends and family gave donations to GiGi's Playhouse in her honor. We provided the funeral home with the GiGi's Playhouse donation envelope and received generous donations along with some beautiful inspirational words about both Rose and the Playhouse. Thank you Giancola Family for thinking of us and helping to make a difference in the



Grandma Rose

life of a child with Down syndrome during such a difficult time.

The Gallagher Family

When Jack Gallagher suddenly passed away the family wanted to honor him. In lieu of flowers they also had people make donations to the Playhouse. All because of the impact a little boy named Micheal had on his life. Micheal has Down syndrome and was one of Jack's best buddies. Thank you to the Gallagher family for sharing their story.



Jack

Caleb Tameling

Happy Birthday Caleb!! When Caleb turned one his family decided not to fill the house with toys he may never use

but instead asked everyone to make a donation to the Playhouse in his honor! Based on the donation, Caleb is a popular boy!



Caleb

The Cirrincione Family

Every year the Cirrincione family, who own Belvidere Banquets, Real Time Sports bar (both in Elk Grove) and the Super Rosa Restaurant Group, have a holiday party in their home and ask everyone to bring an item for the Playhouse! Whether it is office supplies, crafts or gift cards it is most appreciated!! She then goes a step further and makes tons of baskets to raffle off along with merchants who sell items and give a percentage to us! The food is incredible (and the drinks aren't half bad either!!) It is an incredible night of awareness, fun and fundraising! This will be their third one!!! Thank you, guys!!

GiGI FEST 2006 -- our 3 Year Anniversary BASH!!!

Rockin' bands, pony rides, craft bus, face painting, pumpkin decorating, balloons, jumpy houses, food, cotton candy, caramel apples, dancers, the red carpet...It was a party and a half! A huge thank to Julie Snyder and her team for chairing this awesome event!



THANK YOU TO OUR INCREDIBLE SPONSORS!!!

Harris Bank, Starbucks, Schaumburg Jaycees, Bubba the Art Bus, The YellowHammers, Sennheiser, FitzGerald's Night Club, Motorwerks Infiniti of Schaumburg, Home Run Inn Pizza, Baba Luci, Tommy's Red Hots, Sharon Burger, Balloon man Dave Marcus, Mayor Bill McLeod, Candi Natale and her AWESOME dancers, The 5th grade Girl Scout Troop from Aldren school, Perfect Valet, The Hoffman Estates Fire and Police Departments, Jay King Photography, Rocky and Gloria Colella and all of our awesome volunteers!



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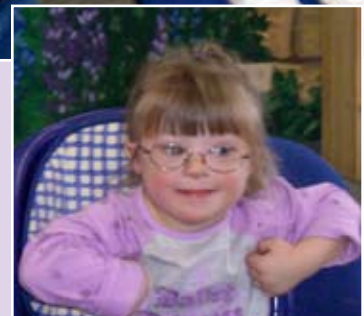
GiGi's Playhouse is Your Playhouse too!!

Be apart of it by going to the 2007 Playhouse Planning Meeting on Monday, November 13th at 7:00 pm. Bring your ideas and we'll bring the h'ors d'oeuvres! We all have hopes and dreams for our children's futures. Come to the meeting and help make those dreams become a reality!

GiGi's Playhouse FREE "Learn to Read" Program Update

Did you know that teaching reading to a child with Down syndrome can lead to improvements in their overall language and communication skills? Children with down syndrome tend to be visual learners...so what better way to teach them a verbal language than to let the SEE it! So often during sessions in our literacy program we see children expand their communication skills by verbalizing or signing new words. Just this week, Somer figured it out...it was just an amazing moment to see the pride on her face when she realized if she said "Please come here" in sign, people would respond. Thank you to Beth Spenadel for volunteering her time to help so many kids learn to read! (and sign!)

For information on this program call Shari at Hoffman Estates 847-885-PLAY or Melissa at Plainfield 630-778-PLAY



Beth Somer signing