

**Gigi's Playhouse**™  
**Down Syndrome Awareness Centers**  
[www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)

# GIGI'S NEWS

Serving 2 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.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)

**Plainfield**  
 10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D • Plainfield, IL 60585  
 630-778-PLAY • [www.gigisplayhousetoo.com](http://www.gigisplayhousetoo.com)

**DECEMBER 2007**

## Spreading Awareness to Our Future Educators!

On Friday, November 19th Nancy and GiGi Gianni were joined by Shari Andress (literacy director at Hoffman Estates), and Natalie and Genia Latka (Plainfield board member and former educator) to give a presentation at Northern Illinois University to graduating special education teachers. What an opportunity!! It was an amazing afternoon of education, awareness and opportunity as they shared how to better serve our kids in school. The presentation helped to showcase all the wonderful things that occur at the Playhouse. Testimonials of the parents we serve were given which showed these future teachers the strength and importance of the Down syndrome community. Shari shared the methodology and success of the Literacy program as GiGi showed off her reading skills! The students were impressed with how many different children we help from ages 2 to

26. Genia shared information about her expectations for Natalie's education. As an educator she also shared ways to help our children do well in the special education classroom. Natalie's energy was contagious as she ran around and shared her toys with them and played peek-a-boo around the podium! Many questions were raised about our children and the type of future we expect for them. Our goal was to show these educators our children's potential and to



teach them that the diagnosis of Down syndrome should not limit what our children are taught nor limit the expectations an educator should have for them. The students left excited about teaching children like ours and surprised at how well they do!

*Thanks NIU! You are truly helping to shape the future for our kids and we can not thank you enough!!!!!!*



*Daniel, posing with our intern Heidi at the Playhouse*

## Daniel

One week after the presentation at NIU, Daniel walked into the Playhouse with a big smile on his face. His sister is in the special education program at NIU and heard about the Playhouse! She told her family and Daniel couldn't wait to come and visit! He will now be a regular in the Friday Friends group. Welcome to the Playhouse, Daniel!

Next month the awareness committee is going to Roosevelt University to speak there and we have a class of future educators from Elmhurst college coming to the Hoffman Playhouse to meet the kids and parents and have a Q & A session. These are such tremendous learning opportunities and can really help shape future educators and the way they view our children.

If you would like to be part of our Awareness Committee, please email Jessica at [jspizzirri@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:jspizzirri@gigisplayhouse.org).



*I had NO idea that in this day and age some doctors would be encouraging termination, speaking of doom and gloom and have so little value for a human life. I will definitely carry all of your wonderful attitudes with me to my professional life. I learned that families need to be supported and they need to know that their child is wonderful no matter what. What a great program you have going — I am sure I will be referring families to you in the near future.*

*—student in Elmhurst's Master of Education in Early Childhood Special Education*

# HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

## Look at them Go!

These obstacles courses are no match for these Crawlers! They are having so much fun that they don't even know that they are gaining muscle strength! We meet the 2nd Saturday of the month.



## Friday Friends Fun

Our Adults had a great Halloween Party. See you on December 28th for our bowling Party at Hoffman Lanes/AMF Bowling, 80 West Higgins Road, Hoffman Estates. *RSVP REQUIRED — 847.885.7529.*



## Girls PJ Party was a Blast!

There were 12 girls here for dancing, crafts, games, hair and nails.

Everyone went home with a new tote bag and sugar buzz from the root beer floats. It was so nice to see the interaction between the girls, some brought friends from school some brought older sisters — everyone got along!



Because of the busy holiday months coming up — look for a boys night in January!



## Oh Boy! Open Play

Open Play has been growing every week! We had lots

of baby boys last month — look at these cuties! Come every Thursday.



## THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

# Walkers and Hop and Skip and Jumpers!

Our Walkers group meets the third Saturday of every month from 9-9:45am. This group of graduated crawlers is facilitated by a PT who creates games and activities to strengthen our walking muscles! Join us!!

The Hop, Skip and Jumpers meets the second Saturday of the month from Noon-1:30pm.

This group has so much fun with crafts and activities that they don't even know that they are working on social, language and gross motor skills! Come and Join us!



## 2 and Under

Our 2 and Under group is one big party! While mom and dad talk to their new friends, the kids get to explore all the toys at the Playhouse! Join us the

2nd Saturday of the month!






















See the calendar for exact times!

## Ghosts, Goblins and Great Fun!

The Halloween Party was a blast! Thanks Cathy, for throwing such a festive party! Look at the creative costumes everyone had!



# HOFFMAN STATES CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<h1>DECEMBER</h1>						1 <b>Christmas Party with Santa!</b> 10am-12Noon Everyone welcome! 
2	3	4 Literacy 11am-2pm Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	5 Chanukah Literacy 6-8pm Special Intentions 7-9pm 	6 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 	7 Literacy 10am-2pm 	8 Crawlers 9-9:45am 2 & Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12noon-1:30pm Literacy 3-6pm 
9 <b>Nuestros Angeles Holiday Party</b> 11am-1pm Hispanic Playgroup	10	11 Literacy 11am-2pm Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	12 Literacy 6-8pm 	13 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 	14 Literacy 10am-2pm 	15 Walkers 9-9:45am Leaps & Bounds 10-11:30am Literacy 3-6pm 
16	17 Board Meeting 7pm	18 Literacy 11am-2pm Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	19 Literacy 6-8pm 	20 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 	21 Literacy 10am-2pm 	22 Kids Club (8-12 yr olds) 10-11:30am Literacy 3-6pm 
23 Polish Group 11am-1pm 	24	25 Christmas 	26	27 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 	28 Friday Friends 7-9pm Meet at bowling alley 	29
30	31 New Years at Noon Party! 11am-1pm 					

**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's awesome!

**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.

**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.

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

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

*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.*

**HO HO HO!!**  
**2 Parties!!**  
Come and Meet Santa Claus at our Christmas Party on December 1st from 10am-12pm!!  
Bring a plate of your favorite Christmas Cookies!  
Then, join us at our New Year's Eve and Noon Party on December 31st!! 11am-1pm

**Kids Club!!** looked great! The next fun-filled 8-12 year old group meeting will be on Saturday, Dec. 22nd, 10-11:30am!

We had a lot of fun at the first meeting of the 8-12 year old group! We did some creative movement activities and the kids had fun making up some clever moves. We also did an art project — decorating banners with our photos, names and stickers. All the banners



# PLAINFIELD LOCATION

## Playhouse Pals!

Our new group for 1st-3rd graders, Playhouse Pals, had a special visitor in October. We had a police officer from the Naperville Police Department come and talk to us about safety. We meet on the third Saturday of the month at GiGi's in Plainfield and our next get together will be December 15th from 1-3pm. New faces are always welcome! If you would like more information call Lori at **630.375.1765**

## High School Musical Party

GiGi's Playhouse Too will be the site of a High School Musical party on Saturday, Jan. 12 from 5-7pm. There will be music, the movie High School Musical, arts and crafts, and pizza! Kids of all ages and their families are invited out for this evening of fun. RSVP to Donna Swanson at **630.688.1366**. Sponsored by the Simple Gifts Foundation.

## 3-4 Year Old Playgroup Notice:

The 3-4 Year Old Playgroup will resume in December with new group leaders! The Playgroup's new leaders, Tom and Lisa Benco, will transition from leading the 2 and Under to leading the 3-4 Year Old group. The group will meet December 1 from 11am-Noon. Bring your 3- or 4-year-old out to the Playhouse on Saturday, December 1st for a morning of fun!!!



Don't miss the next Open Play! Bring the kids on out for a morning of fun on Friday, December 14th from 10am-Noon!

## Reading Tutors Needed

GiGi's Free Literacy Program is looking for additional tutors. This is a fantastic opportunity for teachers, student teachers, and therapists to get involved and work with our wonderful children! For more information, contact the Playhouse at **630-778-PLAY**

## Pre-Crawlers and Crawlers Notice:

Due to the holidays, the December Pre-Crawlers and Crawlers will be canceled. The Pre-Crawlers and Crawlers will resume in January.

## New Group Leaders Wanted

Would you like to see a new playgroup at the Playhouse for your child's age? Have you been thinking of hosting a new playgroup? If so, then contact the Playhouse today at **630-778-PLAY**

## Friday Friends

We would like to bring Friday Friends to Plainfield! Friday Friends will meet one Friday a month and provide fun social interaction for adults 18 years and older. We will have dances, go bowling, have movie nights and other activities. We are looking for some FUN! If you're interested in participating or leading a group like this please e-mail Genia Latka at **geniaanddan@comcast.net** or call **630.272.6598**

## Board Positions

We are growing and are in need of new board members. If you are interested, call the Playhouse at **630-778-PLAY!**

## Board of Directors

Doug Collie, *President*  
**colliedoug@yahoo.com**

Wendy Eurich  
**weurich@comcast.net**

Brendan Conley  
**jbc@macleanpower.com**

Tom Benco  
**tmbenco@yahoo.com**














Genia Latka  
**geniaanddan@comcast.net**

Michele Ptaszek  
**mdp1116@aol.com**

### Contact Information:

Beth Sullivan and Mike Apgar,  
*Co-Directors*  
**apgarfamily@sbcglobal.net**

# PLAINFIELD CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<h1>DECEMBER</h1>						<b>1</b> 2 & Under 9:30-11am 3-4 Year Old Group 11am-Noon Literacy Program 10-11:30am Private Party 2-5pm
<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Literacy Program 3-6 pm By appointment 	<b>4</b> Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	<b>5</b> Chanukah 	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Teen-Tastic 7-9pm 	<b>8</b> Pre-Walkers 9-10am Walkers 10-11am RSVP to 630-423-4035 Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	<b>11</b> Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment Board Meeting 7pm 	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Open Play 10am-Noon 	<b>15</b> Literacy Program 10-11:30am Playhouse Pals 1-3pm 
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	<b>18</b> Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Signing Time 10-11am 	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Christmas 	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm 	<b>31</b>					

All Events are Free unless noted.

\*RSVP to 630-778-PLAY

Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome.

### 2 & under playgroup

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

### 3-4 year old playgroup

Families with children ages 3-4 get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

### Pre-crawlers/Crawlers

This group focuses on crawling skills as well as fine motor skills, social interaction with peers in a semi-structured environment. Pre-crawlers is for children who are just starting to crawl and the Crawlers is for children who are crawling on all fours. Children must be accompanied by a parent/adult.

### Pre-walkers/Walkers

This group focuses on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities (balance beam, kicking, throwing, jumping, etc.) The pre-walkers is for children who are just starting to walk independently and the Walkers group is

for children who are walking independently. Children must be accompanied by a parent/adult.

### Teen-Tastic

This group meets 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.

### 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.

### Open Play

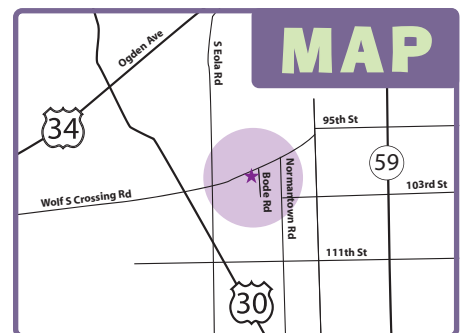
Open to everyone.

### Playhouse Pals

For families with children in 1st-3rd grades.

### Birthday Party

All ages.



10052 South Bode Road, Unit D  
Plainfield, Illinois 60585

phone **630.778.7529**

fax **630.778.7519**

[www.gigisplayhousetoo.com](http://www.gigisplayhousetoo.com)

# Common Threads...

When our 4yr old daughter Jenna was diagnosed with Leukemia in January of 2007 we were given information on various cancer support groups in the area. We thought about it and realized something that probably wasn't common with any other, typically developing child diagnosed with Leukemia. Jenna has Down syndrome and we already had an amazing source for comfort and strength from the friendships we've made at GiGi's Playhouse. The Playhouse



is a place where we can go to again and again for fun activities and educational programs. The families at the Playhouse understand the ups and downs of rais-



ing a child with Down syndrome. Fortunately, not every child with Down syndrome will go through cancer treatment. However, some of our kids, whether its been a heart surgery, GI problems or any other medical issue, will face some sort of medical obstacle. This is just another common thread we share. When we initially moved here 5 yrs ago, I was sad that we didn't have any family in the area. Since that time I am happy to say that our "family" has grown larger than I ever thought possible. Our "Playhouse family" is one that we will forever cherish and one that will continue to support and accept us through whatever obstacles come our way.



## Tribute to My Grandpa...

*My grandfather was my buddy. Even though he was sick, I was able to make him smile and bring him comfort. In his memory, my family will be giving half of the raised donations in his name to GiGi's Playhouse.*

*My Grandpa would be proud to know that he was able to support important organizations even after his death!*

*Thanks Grandpa, we miss you!*  
— Love, Max

Do you want to honor someone? GiGi's has tribute envelopes available for any occasion! Call the Playhouse for more info.

## Promoting Positive Beginnings...

Do you have birth story that you want to share? Was your experience at the hospital positive? Was it negative? GiGi's has partnered with NADS to reach as many hospitals and new parents as



possible! If you have a story to share, let us know so that we can commend the doctors or give them some positive information about Down syndrome! To share your story, e-mail GiGi's Playhouse at [info@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:info@gigisplayhouse.org).

*Together we can make a difference!*



## Holiday of Lights Spectacular!

Use this voucher at this amazing family event!! Have a great time and support GiGi's at the same time!

### Community Voucher

Drive thru spectacular *Holiday Light Show*, fun for the whole family!

Clearbrook's **Wonderland of Lights**  
☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Benefiting

**GiGi's Playhouse**

NOVEMBER 22, 2007-JANUARY 1, 2008

ARLINGTON PARK RACECOURSE  
2200 W. Euclid • Arlington Heights

**Admission: \$10/passenger car**

Clearbrook will give \$2.00 to **GiGi's Playhouse** for every passenger car that presents this voucher at the admission gate **Monday-Thursday ONLY.**

Community Days: **Monday - Thursday**  
5:30 - 9:00 p.m.  
**Open all holidays**

Voucher not valid Friday - Sunday  
Not valid with any other coupon



**Down Syndrome Awareness Centers**  
[www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)

547.577.HOHO clearbrook.org

# 2008 Spread The Love Gala



You are cordially invited to attend our 2nd Annual Spread the Love Gala.  
 Enjoy an evening of excitement & inspiration to benefit  
 GiGi's Playhouse, Down syndrome awareness centers.

Hosted by CBS 2 News Anchor, Rob Johnson

## Saturday, February 9, 2008 at 7pm

*Black Tie Optional*

cocktails • hors d'oeuvres • dinner station • dessert bar • music • dancing • silent auction

Martini Bar sponsored by Ketel One



### Belvedere Banquets

1170 West Devon Avenue  
 Elk Grove Village, IL 60007  
 847-534-0600

**Rooms available at:**  
 Country Inn and Suites  
 847-985-0101

RSVP by January 25, 2008 by sending in the reservation form below.  
 For more information, contact the playhouse at 847-885-7529

Name	Address	
City	State	Zip
Phone	E-mail	

Individual Tickets \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$100.00 each

\*Reserved Table of 10 \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$1,000.00 per table

\*Includes 5 free raffle tickets

I am unable to attend, enclosed is my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of Payment:** \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

For table reservations, please list guests names and phone/e-mail below:

1. _____	6. _____
2. _____	7. _____
3. _____	8. _____
4. _____	9. _____
5. _____	10. _____

### Sponsorship Opportunities:

**GiGi's Platinum Sponsor: \$15,000+**  
 Monetary donation or raffle/auction  
 prize equaling \$15,000 or more  
 VIP seating and 10 tickets to the event

**GiGi's Gold Sponsor: \$5,000**  
 Monetary donation or raffle/auction  
 prize equaling \$5,000 or more

**GiGi's Silver Sponsor: \$1,000**  
 Monetary donation or raffle/auction  
 prize equaling \$1,000 or more

**GiGi's Bronze Sponsor: \$500**  
 Monetary donation or raffle/auction  
 prize equaling \$500 or more

**Mail To:** GiGi's Playhouse • Attn: Spread The Love Gala • 1069 West Golf Road • Hoffman Estates, Illinois 60169



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers  
www.gigisplayhouse.org

1069 W Golf Rd.  
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

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**Save  
These  
Dates**

**Dec. 1st  
Christmas Party  
Christmas Caroling  
at Friendship Villiage**  
call the Playhouse for date & time  
**Dec. 31st  
New Year's Eve Noon Party**

*Happy Holidays*

**2 Parties, 1 Month**  
**Meet Santa Claus on Sat.,  
Dec. 1st from 10am-12pm.**  
**Sit on Santa's lap and  
get your picture taken!**  
**Everyone welcome!**



**Come Caroling  
with Us**

Join us at Friendship Village Retirement Home to sing for our biggest fans. Bring your whole family to celebrate the holiday season. Friendship Village is located at: 350 W. Schaumburg Rd. in Schaumburg. *RSVP to the Hoffman Estates Playhouse.* **Call the Playhouse for the date and time.**

**New Years at Noon!**

Let's count down to the New Year together! On Monday December 31st, from 11am-1pm, at the Hoffman Estates Playhouse, join us to ring in 2008!

**Our Holiday Raffle  
has Started!**

Look at these new prices!! Tickets are only \$25 each or 5 tickets for \$100!! The Grand Drawing will take place at the Gala on February 9, 2008. Prizes include jewelry, exotic trips and more!! You can purchase your raffle tickets online or call the Playhouse at **847.885.7529**. Want to help sell tickets at your school, work or community? Call us for more info!

**2008 Calendars**



**Give the Gift of Awareness**

To purchase this perfect holiday gift, go online to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** or call the Playhouse! It's a perfect gift for therapists, teachers, and friends!