



GiGi's Playhouse™
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

www.gigisplayhouse.org

GIGI'S NEWS

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

Hoffman Estates

Plainfield

McHenry

Chicago

Now Serving **4** Locations

AUGUST 2008

From the Heart of a Volunteer

I have been volunteering at GiGi's Playhouse for the past year. I found out about GiGi's through an ad in the bulletin at my church, St. Anne's. Children with disabilities have always had a special place in my heart. I was glad to see it was an organization that above all else was taking care of those that needed help. When I came I asked to be given a project and they handed me the Literacy program. My role is to coordinate the Literacy program at the Hoffman Estates location. I match tutors with prospective students and maintain the database and waiting lists. We started to reorganize the Literacy room for the tutors so that they can concentrate on the reason they are there —



Susan & Max

tutoring the kids. I keep coming back each week because it's one of the only places where everything that I do has a positive outcome. When I create a book, I know that it is given to child as he learns to read. When I answer the phone, I can help link a new parent to the resources they need. When I match the kids with their tutor, I am able to see the relationships that are made and the impact it has on the child as they complete their 16 week sessions.

After a long career in public service, I still need a mission and a purpose and I feel that GiGi's offers that type of quality volunteer opportunity.

In addition to Literacy, an ever ringing phone needs to be answered! A lot of times on the other side of that ringing phone is a new parent who feels alone, desperate and looking for sup-

port. Being able to invite them to Open Play, send them a Celebration packet, and congratulate them is an honor. The best reward is hearing the new found hope in the voice on the other end of the phone. The road to resources and support opens for them. Where else can you get that kind of experience as a volunteer?

It's like nothing I have ever experienced in other agencies. The level of commitment by the tutors is above and beyond what I am used to seeing in volunteers. They truly care about each student they are paired with and I am proud to work with each of them. Everything I do here is somehow a part of someone's future — folding a newsletter, playing at Open Play, making a book — it's all about the future of that little one who is the beneficiary of the Playhouse.

— Susan Doody,
HE Literacy Coordinator

Congratulations Jim Dickerson Winner of the 5K Race 2 Years in a Row!

When Charlie was born with Down syndrome, our family quickly became involved with GiGi's Playhouse. The sense of community was invaluable in helping us understand our situation and discover all the support that is out there. I have been a runner since high school and am currently a Cross country and Track



coach. When I heard that GiGi's has 5K's, it was a no brainer to support this great organization! I won last year and then this year I joined the 5K Committee to help with the creation of the race logistics etc. I wanted to be more involved in helping a cause that is so close to our family as well as being something I love doing — running!

Running would be easy for me to take for granted. I have a talent that most people do not have. Having Charlie has made me realize that you can't take anything for granted! He has helped me focus on what's important in life — that being a star athlete is not as important as being happy and being loving. I have been given a gift in running just like I have been given a gift with Charlie!

In short, running is a gift I no longer take for granted, even though I have not used it as much as I did in the past, and when I can represent myself as "Charlie's dad," it is great. I know Charlie will run the 5K someday too (he had quite a day doing the 1 mile walk!), and I can't wait to run it with him!



INSPIRE!



The 2009 Calendar is almost here and will INSPIRE you each and every time you look at it!! Pre-order your calendars now by going to www.gigisplayhouse.org and click on Store. The 2008 calendars are 1/2 price and continue to send a message of hope and inspiration to all who view the pictures and read the heartfelt family quotes. Order yours today!



GiGi's is More Than Just a PLAYhouse

GiGi's Playhouses are full of parents, professionals and volunteers with a wealth of knowledge and experience just waiting for someone to share with. There are just so many aspects of Down syndrome that you can almost bet that someone else in the Playhouse has experienced something that you're facing right now. Yup — someone here has something they can share with you to help you through all of the different challenges! All you have to do is ASK. Come visit any of the playgroups and talk to the other parents, you'd be surprised to know that at some point, they were not only in your shoes, but also asking a Playgroup Parent!



It's GiGiFest Time!

GiGi's Playhouse is Turning Five Years Old! Celebrate with us at the Hoffman Estates Playhouse from **Noon-3pm on Sunday, Oct. 5th.**



Petting zoos, inflatables, food, games and more! This is a party you won't want to miss!!

Wow, What a Conference!

Five GiGi's Playhouse representatives took a trip to Boston for the National Down Syndrome Congress conference! What a great time! We learned so many things about great organizations around the world (there were over 15 countries represented there!) and we

were able to share about GiGi's Playhouse to many interested people! Next year the conference will be in Sacramento, see you there!



Sharing the Love

McHenry, IL

The Options and Advocacy for McHenry County group heard about GiGi's and visited us at our Grand Opening celebration. They brought gifts and offered assistance in spreading the mission of GiGi's. They are using the McHenry Playhouse for their monthly playgroup.



Does your group need a meeting place? Call your local Playhouse!

Party with the Polish Playgroup!

And what a party it was! A big thank you to Phyllis Kotel who brought cake and gifts to all the kids in the awesome Polish speaking playgroup! To celebrate all the birthdays in the group, they had a big party full of food, games, fun and more! This Playgroup, along with Nuestros Angeles (our Spanish-speaking playgroup), has become a phenomenal resource to multicultural fami-

lies. They have so much fun networking, playing and sharing ideas. And they always have the best food! Check

your local Playhouse calendar to see when the next group meets — and be sure to go!! You'll have a blast!



Programs & Activities!!

Look at all of our free educational programs and activities!
Check your local Playhouse calendar to see times and dates.

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

Crawlers ● This group focuses on crawling skills as well as fine motor skills, social interaction with peers in a semi-structured environment.

Walkers ● This group focuses on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities (balance beam, kicking, throwing, jumping, etc.)

Hop, Skip and Jumpers ● This program helps promote friendships, social skills, and interactive play through fun creative activities! For preschool and kindergartners (3-5yr olds).

Playhouse Pals ● This structured playgroup focuses on developing friendships and confidence all while having a great time! 1st -3rd grades (6-8yr olds)

Kids Club ● This fast paced group incorporates social, communication and confidence-building skills and activities! 4th-8th grades.(9-12 yr olds)

Teen Tastic ● What a party! We order pizza for dinner and have lots of fun watching movies and playing games with each other. 9th-12th grades (13-17 year olds)

Friday Friends ● Karaoke, dances, softball games – the fun never ends!
Adults 18 and over.

Nuestros Angeles ● Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education!

Polish Group ● What a party! Many Polish speaking families attend this group each month to meet other families and have a great time together!

Open Play ● Come on over for pizza, pop and fun! Everyone is welcome to this weekly gathering of networking and friendship building.

Literacy ● Our free Literacy program teaches kids with Downs syndrome how to read the way that they learn best!! This is by appointment only – call your local Playhouse for more info.

Daddy and Me ● Dads, bring your kids and meet other fathers in your area! What a great time to hang out with your kids while meeting new people.

Reserve it! ● The Playhouse can be reserved for any Down syndrome function or other special needs group. Call your local Playhouse for more info.

*Children must always be accompanied by a parent/adult

Hop, Skip & Jumpers

Hoffman Estates, IL

These 3-5 year olds had a great time at their summer luau party! They sang songs, learned each other's names, and everyone made colorful paper leis (utilizing fine motor skills, learning colors and having lots of fun at the same time!) before playing limbo. Everyone had a great time, and it gave parents and siblings a chance to connect with other parents and siblings



and get to know each other. As one mother says, "It is so important for families to come and ask questions and share. It is really important to have a forum where a facilitator can involve parents in conversations where they feel comfortable sharing with each other and learning from each other."

Are You a Therapist?

Call your local Playhouse to help with our programs!

Saturday Playgroups

Plainfield, IL

This growing group is simply amazing at welcoming the newcomers with open arms and love.



The children all play wonderfully together, some sharing, some not, exploring



everything and helping each other to try new things.

In June, we had several visitors from Florida; Kristen and Logan from Panama City and Zane and Cale's Grandmother visited the Playhouse. Kristen's mother is a volunteer with the Playhouse and Logan was a simply adorable little boy who had a blast checking out all the




















toys. Zane and Cale's Grandmother sat comfortably to the side, drinking in the exuberance of all the children and doing what a Grandmother does best, holding the babies! We always have children of all ages

visiting this group, older siblings and new babies, so feel free to drop in and share in the play!



HOFFMAN ESTATES

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
August					1	2
3 Camp GiGi 10am-Noon Literacy 3-7pm 	4 Camp GiGi 10am-Noon Literacy 3-6pm 	5 Camp GiGi 10am-Noon Literacy 3-6pm 	6 Camp GiGi 10am-Noon Literacy 6-8pm Special Intentions 7pm 	7 Camp GiGi 10am-Noon Open Play 12:30-2pm 	8 Camp GiGi 10am-Noon	9 Crawlers 9-9:45am 2 and Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers Noon-1:30pm 
10 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm 	11 Literacy 3-7pm 	12 Literacy 3-6pm 	13 Literacy 6-8pm Gala Meeting 7pm 	14 Open Play 12:30-2pm 	15	16
17 Meeting 7pm Literacy 3-7pm 	18 Literacy 3-6pm 	19 Literacy 6-8pm 	20 Open Play 12:30-2pm 	21	22	23 Private Therapy Dog Session 10am
24 Polish Group 11am-1pm 	25 Literacy 3-7pm Board of Directors Meeting 7pm 	26 Literacy 3-6pm 	27 Literacy 6-8pm Literacy Nite 6:30pm 	28 Open Play 12:30-2pm Wendy's 4-8pm 	29 Friday Friends 7pm 	30 Kids Club 10-11:30am 
31						

2009 Spread the Love Gala Planning

It's not too soon to be thinking about the next Spread The Love Gala to be held February 7, 2009. Come join us for our first planning meeting and see how you can be a part of this amazing event. We will meet at the playhouse on Wednesday, August 13th at 7pm. Can't make it to this meeting but still want to help? E-mail Lora Bak at lbak@gigisplayhouse.org and let her know! We hope you can join us.



Eat at Wendy's & Help GiGi's!

Take your family and friends to dinner at Wendy's on August 28th and you will be helping support GiGi's!

See you there **Aug. 28th** from 4-8pm!
29 Golf Road
(Golf & Roselle)



Play With Us!

Open Play is a weekly party at the Playhouse! We have pizza, juice and so much fun! Join us every week! What an experience it is to see the parents networking, the siblings hanging out, and the kids having a great time!!



Camp GiGi

It's not too late for your 6-8 year old to register. Call **847.885.7529**.

It's Softball Time!



Friday Friends vs. Parents!!

Invite your friends, siblings, and parents because we are taking them on... ice cream social to follow.

Mom's Night Out!!

Join us at the playhouse for some much needed socializing (with out kids) and a Playhouse fundraiser. We will be hosting a 'Wildtree' Cooking Party with 30% of the profits going back to the playhouse. Wildtree was founded on the premise that food should be natural, nutritious, delicious, and easy to prepare. So come join us on Thursday **Sept. 11th** at 7pm to hear more and meet some other moms. Please RSVP to **847.885.7529** and bring a friend!

PLAINFIELD

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<h1>August</h1>					1	2 & Under 9:30-11am Literacy 9:30-10am Literacy 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i> 3-4 Year Old Playgroup 11am-Noon
3	4	5 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i>	6 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i>	7 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i>	8	9 Pre-Walkers 9-10am Walkers 10-11am RSVP 630.423.4035 Literacy 9:30-10am Literacy 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i> Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm
10	11	12 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i>	13 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i>	14 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i>	15	16 Literacy Program 9:30-10am Literacy Program 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i>
17	18	19 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i>	20 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i>	21 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i> Seminar: Teaching Methods for Children with DS 7-9pm	22	23 Literacy Program 9:30-10am Literacy Program 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i>
Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm	25	26 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i>	27 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i>	28 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i>	29 Evening Open Play 6-8pm	30
31					EOP	

1st Annual Doubles Bag Toss Tournament

Come join the fun with family and friends to help raise awareness about our playhouse and raise funds for our programs!!!

When: Sunday September 7th

Registration at 1pm,
Games to begin at 1:30pm

Where: Waubonsie Valley High School, Gold Campus in Aurora

How: Register a team of 2 by Sunday, August 31st. Each person must collect \$30 in donations to participate (\$60 per Team)

- There will be cash prizes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place teams!!
- A light lunch will be available for \$2 a person.
- You can even win a set of boards and bags by entering our raffle!

For more info: registration form, pledge sheet, and a sponsorship letter to aid in collecting donations visit our website at: www.gigisplayhouse.org or contact Genia Latka at: glatka@gigisplayhouse.org.

Friday Open Play

Hope you all have had a wonderful summer! School has begun again but let's have one more fun summer night. Come join us on Friday, August 29th from 6-8 pm for pizza picnic at the park. Bring the bug spray and maybe we can catch some lightning bugs! Please RSVP to Genia at glatka@gigisplayhouse.org by Wed., August 27th. The park is less than 3 minutes from the playhouse.

Playhouse Pals



Just a reminder that the Playhouse Pals are taking a break for the summer, but hope to start back up the third Saturday in September. If you have a 1st-3rd grader and don't

receive Playhouse Pals email updates, then contact Lori at: prfstck@sbc-global.net.













August Crawlers Group

The Crawlers group is going to take August off, but will be back and scooting around come September! We love to watch our little darlings explore their world!

We Need More Space!

The kids are growing, the groups are growing, the only thing not growing is our space! If you know any property owners in the vicinity who would be willing to work with GiGi's Playhouse Plainfield to find more space please call **630.778.PLAY**. We have over 100 families visiting the playhouse every month. These families are consumers too and they will buy coffee and sandwiches, get haircuts for their families, etc. In addition, we have events that draw attention to the retail area for the day and actually provide free advertising for the local businesses.

August

					Girls Night Out 1 6:30-8:30pm RSVP 815.385.7529 Food, Danicing, Makeup & Hair, Nails	2
Nuestros Angeles 3 Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm 	4	Open Play 5 10am-Noon Pizza & Fun 	6	7	Teen Tastics 8 7pm 	9
10	11	Open Play 12 10am-Noon Pizza & Fun 	13	14	Kids Club 15 6-8pm 	16
17	18	Open Play 19 10am-Noon Pizza & Fun 	2 & Under 20 10-11:30am	21	22	Open Play 23 10-11:30am 
Daddy & Me 24 9-11am 	25	Open Play 26 10am-Noon Pizza & Fun 	27	28	Friday Friends 29 7pm 	30
Hop, Skip & Jumpers 31 10-11:30am						

McHenry Spot Light

We would like to feature, just a friend, **Molly Klowas** of Antioch. Molly was looking for a way to become involved with the community and contribute to it, not just take from it. To her surprise the rewards of her actions have tripled her expectations. Molly has volunteered to help at the 5K Fun Run and Walk for two years. This year she is even more excited to have the McHenry Playhouse close to home. She has dedicated herself to help spread the good news of GiGi's in the community and to help running our programs. We are lucky to have such enthusiasm in action.



Local Playhouse Advisory Boards are charged with being accountable for finances, awareness and programs for the Playhouse. Sharing ideas can be fun, here's how we are doing that in McHenry with the help of our community.

AWARENESS

We have been participating in many events that allow us to Spread the Love with people who may not know about GiGi's.

At the Fun Day at the Farm program for children with special needs, held in Woodstock, we were provided a booth to display our information and talk to people about our programs. We had a chance to meet Cory Huff at the McHenry Chamber Expo (back in May) and she invited us to participate in this family event.

For summer fun, McHenry Playhouse "sponsored a hole" in the first annual Down Syndrome Research and Treatment Foundation Golf Outing, sponsored by Hayes Mechanical which was held at Harborside Golf Center in Chicago. The foundation supports medical research in the treatments that will improve cognition in people with DS. Our very own

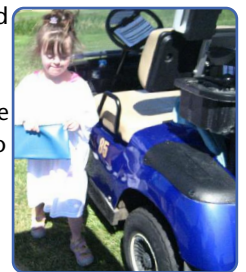


Christine Ancel proudly participated by selling 50/50 raffle tickets to golfers. At the dinner, she stood in front and handed out each prize, shaking hands, congratulation each person and then posing for pictures with them! She was an awesome self advocate and ambassador for DS.



Because we are spreading the love, our photographer from Artography, Leslie Lipps, donated her booth at the Grayslake Farmers Market. The market is visited by over 1200 people each week. We were very fortunate to spend a beautiful afternoon promoting the Playhouse.

LITERACY PROGRAMS

We are very proud to share that our Literacy Programs are running well. We are very fortunate to be supported by so many talented, caring and compassionate people. Ms. Hope McCarthy is one such person.



CHICAGO

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
August					1	2 Private Party 2-4pm
3 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Group 10am-Noon	4 Literacy 9am-Noon	5 Open Play Noon-1:30pm	6 Literacy 9am-Noon Open Play 5-7pm	7	8	9 Playhouse Pals 11am-12:30pm
			 			
10 Daddy and Me 11am-1pm	11 Literacy 9am-Noon	12 Open Play Noon-1:30pm	13 Literacy 9am-Noon Open Play 5-7pm	14	15	16
			 			
17	18 Literacy 9am-Noon	19 Open Play Noon-1:30pm	20 Literacy 9am-Noon Open Play 5-7pm	21	22 Friday Friends (18 & older)	23 Crawlers 9-9:45am 2 & Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers Noon-1:30pm
			 			
24	25 Literacy 9am-Noon	26 Open Play Noon-1:30pm	27 Literacy 9am-Noon Open Play 5-7pm	28	29	30
			 			
31						

Mark Your Calendars 1st Annual Taste of GiGi's Playhouse

The fundraiser for GiGi's Playhouse Chicago will take place on August 16th, from 5 to 10pm at the Historic Logan Square Auditorium at 2539 N. Kedzie. Some of Chicago's best eateries will be offering food samples, and drinks will be provided by Heineken USA, Sam's Wines and Liquors, Vas Foremost Liquors and noFriction Cafe. Live Band Karaoke (in conjunction with GiGi's Chicago board members and interested guests) will provide entertainment beginning at 8pm. Register now at gigisplayhouse.org

Aug. 16th



Bringing it to Chicago

Like many parents, we were concerned about how our family would be affected by Colin's birth five years ago. We wondered if we would constantly be branded as "different" because we had a child with Down syndrome and how the world would look at us. And, we wondered if there were any other families like us. The minute we walked into GiGi's in Hoffman Estates, we knew we had found a place where we could feel not just accepted, but normal. We met other families who had gone through and were going through the same experi-

ences we were, and have used them as resources. Most importantly, GiGi's is not just a place for Colin, but is truly



for the whole family. (Colin's older brother and younger sister look forward to going there as much as Colin.) That's why I wanted to be on the board of GiGi's Playhouse Chicago — to give back after all that it's given us, and to help other families who may need that place of normalcy in the future. We are so excited about bringing GiGi's to the City!

Aaron Baar — GiGi's Playhouse Chicago Board Member, and father of Colin, 5.



Hoffman Estates
1069 W. Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

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Register Now

It's not too late
Golf Outing July 31st
Call **630.778.PLAY**

Register at
www.gigisplayhouse.org

Aug. 16th for the **Taste of GiGi's Playhouse in Chicago!**
Look inside for details!

It's Finally Here!!

You've seen the 'i have a voice' video and now the Traveling Gallery will be featured at the The North Shore Festival of Art!

WHEN: July 26-27 • 10am-5pm

WHERE: Westfield Old Orchard Shopping Center at the intersection of Golf Road and Skokie Boulevard

WHAT: Located in Skokie, The North Shore Festival of Art.

Over 25,000 people will view this Gallery and see the amazing depth

and beauty in these individuals with Down syndrome! The Gallery is one of 150 chosen artistic works to be displayed! There will be food, live music and lots of fun things to see!

Be sure to bring your family and friends to this FREE event in support of all our friends with Down syndrome and in support of the vision to bring positive awareness about their potential to the world!

July 26-27

SAVE THE DATE

Please join us for an important 2-hour seminar on successful teaching methods for children with Down syndrome. Sharon Tate, Assistant Superintendent, Student Services of Indian Prairie School District 204 will be moderating the seminar on Thursday, August 21st from 7-9pm. For more info, please contact GiGi's Playhouse, Plainfield: **630.778.7529**

Aug. 21st

Hoffman Estates locations

1069 West Golf Road
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
847.885.PLAY

Plainfield
10052 South Bode Road, Unit D
Plainfield, IL 60585
630.778.PLAY

McHenry
1720 North Richmond Road
McHenry, IL 60050
815.385.PLAY

Chicago
3660 West Irving Park Road
Chicago, IL 60618
773.583.PLAY

4 to serve you

