

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

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

Serving 2 Locations

Plainfield

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

FEBRUARY 2008

Welcoming a New Year and with it, New Beginnings!

When Michelle first called the Playhouse, I was surprised by her enthusiasm for Down syndrome. She told me about the early intervention her daughter was set up to receive, she asked when she could come to the Playhouse and wanted to know what materials we had to spread positive awareness. I asked how old her daughter was and she told me that the baby was due in March! This blessed baby was not even born yet and already had



her mom's heart wrapped around her finger! Michelle had heard about GiGi's through a family member and called the Playhouse after receiving the pre-natal diagnosis.

When she received the Celebration Packet from us, she was surprised at how congratulatory it was. Michelle wanted to be as pro-active as possible and do all she could prior to her daughter being born. She states, "Now I am to the point where I actually feel lucky! I am

so excited to meet her! I used to be a Special Education teacher. Now I get to be the student and I am thrilled." Michelle, her mom, and her 16 month old twins visited the Playhouse and were welcomed with open arms. She was able to talk to new moms and learn from them what it was like. Though her husband was not able to join her that day, he is looking forward to coming to the Playhouse as well. Grandma says, "It's amazing that this place is here! Not just for children and adults but for the whole family. I've never seen so many smiling faces in my life!"

Welcome Michelle and family!!

We are so happy that you are part of our Playhouse family!!

Happy New Year to All!

We at GiGi's Playhouse know how to ring in the New Year! Complete with a balloon drop, sparkling apple juice and lots of people, our New Years at Noon Party was a blast! Here is a quote from one of the Hosts at the party, "We had lots of out of town guests, who enjoyed the fun loving atmosphere. Boy scout troop 339 did an outstanding job as hosts, and

Mason Ross's girl scout troop came to run face painting and a drawing station. Thanks to all the help we had an outstanding New Years Eve Party. "What a way to start the New Year," was said by many. Our California friends shared their good cheer of their new center opening in San Diego, they were inspired a few years ago with a visit to GiGi's. I guess we touch the lives from people from all over the world!"



HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

Kids Club

Our 8-12 year old group is our newest and fastest growing group! Last month we had so much fun doing a dress up activity, decorating crowns and dancing! We had a group of great dancers! This

month we did karaoke and had a blast! We also decorated cookies for the holi-

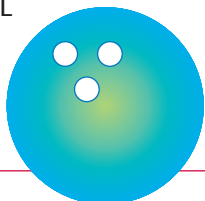
days and did a lot of creative movement activities. The Kids Club is run by a licensed OT who has a passion for our kids!! Join us next month on February 23rd for another time of fun and friends!



Friday Friends Holiday Bowling Party Rescheduled!!

Meet us at:
Hoffman Lanes/AMF Bowling
80 West Higgins Road
Hoffman Estates, IL

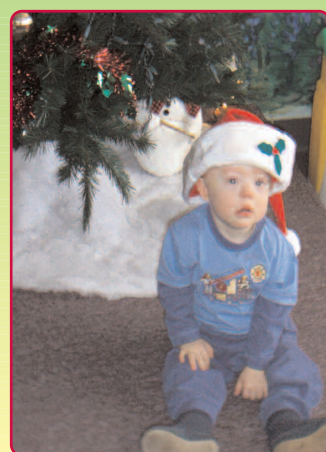
RSVP required
847.885.7529
See you there!!!



Polish Group

Look how much fun the Polish Holiday Party was! They had awesome food and great presents! This group meets the 4th Sunday of the month from 11am-1pm.

Come join the fun!



What a Busy Saturday!!!

Look at the programs we have on the 2nd Saturday of the month:

Crawlers

Our crawlers are moving like you cannot believe! This group of pre-walkers are having so much fun maneuvering around the room and investigating all the neat toys at the Playhouse! We meet the 2nd Saturday of the month from 9-9:45am.

2 & Under

This group is open to everyone and is a huge hit!! Siblings welcome too! Join us the 2nd Saturday of every month from 10-11:30am.

Hop, Skip and Jumpers!!

This fast paced group is so much fun! With crafts, games and songs, we work on social skill development and meet new friends! Join us from Noon-1:30pm on the 2nd Saturday!

THANK YOU!

We would like to thank all the 2007 Program Hosts and Volunteers that give of their time, creativity and energy each month to ensure that our families and kids feel loved the minute they walk in the door. We appreciate you and all you do and look forward to working with you in 2008! Interested in becoming a Program Host or Volunteer? Call the Playhouse!! **847.885.7529**.



Valentines Day Teddy Bear & Tea Party

**Join us Saturday,
February 16th from
10am-Noon for our
Valentines Day party!!
Bring your favorite
Teddy Bear and help
us make Valentines Day
cards!!**



RSVP to
847.885.7529

HOFFMAN STATES CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<div>February</div>					1	2
						Literacy 9-10am
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
		Literacy Noon-2pm 	Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm Special Intentions 7-9pm 	Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 		Crawlers 9-9:45am 2&Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers Noon-1:30pm GALA 7pm
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm 		Literacy Noon-2pm 	Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm 	Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 		Valentines Day Party 10am-Noon
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		Literacy Noon-2pm 	Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm 	Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 	Friday Friends Meet at Bowling Alley 7pm 	Literacy 9-10am Kids Club 10-11:30am
24	25	26	27	28	29	
Polish Group 11am-1pm 	Board of Directors Meeting 7pm	Literacy Noon-2pm 	Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm Literacy Nite 6:30-8:30pm 	Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm 		

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 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 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.

Don't Forget!

Literacy Nite on the 27th!

**Come and make books with us!
Learn how to make your own
books or get some materials to
work on at home with your kids!**

Having a Birthday?

Reserve the Playhouse! You can reserve the Playhouse for any Down syndrome related event. When available, it may also be used by other groups with special needs. Think about the positive awareness that is spread by bringing people to the Playhouse! Call today to book your party at no charge!!



PLAINFIELD LOCATION

Come Out for Crawlers!

Is your child starting to crawl? We have a great group that meets once a month on Saturday and would love to see you there. It's a semi-structured group that provides socialization with peers and a great time with mom or dad. We have some wonderful volunteers that have great ideas for the new year. Come see what all the fun is about and learn some

skills while you are there. Our pre-crawlers group is for children who are just starting to crawl or scoot on their tummies. The crawlers group is for children who are actively crawling but not yet walking. If you would like to be part of this fun and exciting group or if you have any questions, please call Wendy Eurich at **630.423.4035** or email Wendy at **weurich@comcast.net**

Come Sign With Us

2 & Under attendees, come out a half hour before the 2 & Under Playgroup and learn some sign language! The signing class will be from 9-9:30am, just prior to the 2 & Under group.

join 

Evening Open Play

We would like to have an evening of open play. Come join us for one fun Friday night a month! We can play and meet new friends. Each month will be different. We will focus on having fun doing a variety of things: crafts, playing games, watching movies and maybe having a theme night too! We will meet from 6-8pm. All ages are welcome! Look for it in March's calendar. See you there!

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**

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**

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 & Mike Apgar,
Co-Directors
apgarfamily@sbcglobal.net



Open Play



We had another fun morning of Open Play on Friday, Dec. 14! There was coloring, arts and crafts, pretend play in the

kitchen, ball playing, dancing... you name it! Don't miss the next Open Play on Friday, February 8th from 9-11am.



Walkers & Jumpers

We want to invite all the new walkers out there to come and join our Walkers group (previously the Pre-walkers group). Your children will learn new skills and master the ones they already know while they are having fun with their peers. We meet on the second Saturday of the month at 9:00am.

Does your child walk independently but need help learning how to jump, run

and hop? Then we have the group for you. We play fun games with our peers and learn new skills at the same time. We have changed the name to Jumpers (previously called Walkers). We have physical therapists that run this active group so they are sure to have a lot of fun. If you have any questions about these groups or would like to sign up today then call Wendy Eurich at **630.423.4035** or email Wendy at **weurich@comcast.net**



















Playhouse Pals

Don't miss the next Playhouse Pals!

There's always something new and exciting happening! The next Playhouse Pals is Saturday, February 16th from 1-3pm.



PLAINFIELD CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<div>February</div>					<div>1</div> <div>Teen-Tastic 7-9pm</div> 	<div>2</div> <div>2 & Under 9:30-11am</div> <div>Literacy Program 9:30-10am</div> <div>11:15-11:45am</div> <div>By appointment</div> <div>3-4 Year Old Playgroup 11am-Noon</div> 
<div>3</div>	<div>4</div>	<div>5</div> <div>Literacy Program 4:30-6pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>6</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-5pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>7</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-6:30pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>8</div> <div>Open Play 9-11am</div> 	<div>9</div> <div>Pre-Walkers 9-10am</div> <div>Walkers 10-11am</div> <div>RSVP 630.423.4035</div> <div>Literacy Program 9:30-10am</div> <div>11:15-11:45am</div> <div>By appointment</div> <div>Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm</div>
<div>10</div>	<div>11</div>	<div>12</div> <div>Literacy Program 4:30-6pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>13</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-5pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>14</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-6:30pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>15</div> <div>Signing Time 10-11am</div> 	<div>16</div> <div>Literacy Program 9:30-10am</div> <div>11:15-11:45am</div> <div>By appointment</div> <div>Playhouse Pals 1-3pm</div> 
<div>17</div>	<div>18</div>	<div>19</div> <div>Literacy Program 4:30-6pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>20</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-5pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>21</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-6:30pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>22</div>	<div>23</div> <div>Pre-Crawlers 9-10am</div> <div>Crawlers 10-11am</div> <div>RSVP to Judy 630.961.2430</div> <div>Literacy Program 9:30-10am</div> <div>11:15-11:45am</div> <div>By appointment</div>
<div>24</div> <div>Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm</div> 	<div>25</div>	<div>26</div> <div>Literacy Program 4:30-6pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>27</div> <div>Literacy Program 4-5pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>28</div> <div>Literacy program 4-6:30pm</div> <div>By appointment</div> 	<div>29</div>	

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

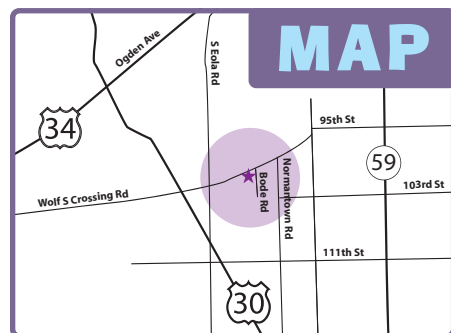
Open to everyone.

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



My face may be different,
but my feelings the same.

I laugh and I cry

and take pride in my gains.

I was sent here among you
to teach and to love

as God in the heavens

looks down from above.

To Him I'm no different,

His love knows no bounds;

It's those here among you,

in cities and towns

that judge me by standards

that man has imparted,

but this family I've chosen

will help me get started.

For I'm one of the children,

so special and few,

that came here to learn

the same lessons as you.

That love is acceptance,

it must come from the heart;

we all have the same purpose,

though not the same start.

The Lord gave me life

to live and embrace,

and I'll do it as you do,

but at my own pace.

-unknown

What an Incredible Gift Giving Season!

“ A special thank you from GiGi:
I am lucky to be surrounded by
friends and family who
love me and all my
friends with Down
syndrome so much!
Every time I walk
into the Playhouse,
I am reminded that
everyone there accepts
me for who I am and they help us
spread the word about all of the poten-
tial that my friends and I have!! The sup-
port of all my friends and Playhouse fam-
ily is overwhelming! I know my mom
and dad feel so blessed to know every
one of you! Thank you so much for you
support – emotionally, financially, and
physically!! You inspire all of us to
keep up the hard work!!



XOXO
GiGi

A heartfelt thank you goes out once again to the **Cirincione family** as they had their annual fundraiser to raise awareness and funds for GiGi's Playhouse. They started a scholarship in honor of their friend Colleen Mullen who passed away. The event raised over \$5000!! These funds will be used towards continued education for our children and adults with Down syndrome.

Thank you, **Zurich America** and **The Coleman Foundation** for giving us grants to continue our Literacy and education programs!! You are bringing us closer to our dreams!!

Thank you to the **DiMucci brothers** for donating \$10,000!! What a blessing that will be to our families and children as we can develop stronger programs, reach more kids, and spread even more awareness about the potential in our kids!!

From Heidi, our Intern...

If you dream, you can dream bigger. I have been learning that lesson in my experience at GiGi's Playhouse. There is always more that can be done. I am around great moms everyday, not because they're any better than you or I, but because they see a beautiful potential in their kids that the world doesn't see yet. They are working to advocate for their children. They have this energy that inspires me to work towards something greater than myself. I have met so many little blessings. In all my readings and research and interviews, I couldn't have learned what I learned just by meeting the kids who have Down syndrome.

When I started interning at GiGi's Playhouse, I didn't know what to expect or how to be an intern, but I quickly learned what was expected. It has been such a special experience. I was drawn to this place because I have always been drawn to people with Down syndrome. The world is truly missing out on knowing these special people.



I came into this internship as a student and I am leaving inspired to see where these experiences will take me in the future. I think when you realize you could do what you're doing for free, that's when you know you found what you love. I saw the perspective of the mother and it taught me to empathize. I think it's good for every position to see the other perspective. Doctors should spend a day with nurses.

Special Education teachers should spend a day with a parent of a child with a disability. I've learned true acceptance of all different individuals and I've come to appreciate our differences. Sometimes life really is about embracing what life gives us. GiGi's Playhouse is truly an inspirational place to be and I am so grateful for this opportunity. *Thank you, Heidi, for your hard work and passion as you interned for us over the last 5 months!! We appreciate all your hard work and wish you well in your future endeavors!! Be sure to visit us soon! Know someone looking for an internship? Call the Playhouse!!*



Hit the Ground Running!

Our Literacy program is off and running in 2008!!

We have started our new 16 week sessions and it is going great!!! With the new structure of the program we have been able to take over 20 new children off the waiting list!! Those that have been in the program are able to continue to receive materials as well as consult with one of our volunteer tutors!! Are you interested in getting your child into the program? Interested in Tutoring?

Call the Playhouse at
847.885.7529
for more information.



Thanks St. Viator!!



You are making a difference!

On Friday, Dec. 21st, high school students from St. Viator paid 2 dollars each to be able to "dress down" and wear jeans. All the proceeds went to GiGi's Playhouse. A display case was put up the week before the dress down day to educate students about Down syndrome and GiGi's Playhouse as well as the services we provide for families. What great awareness for these students to learn about Down syndrome! We are humbled that they chose to give the proceeds to GiGi's. Thanks, St Viator!!

Our "SPREAD THE LOVE" Holiday Raffle

Our 2008 Raffle is off to a great start! Grand prize is a **mink coat** valued at \$15,000, second prize is a **1 week paradise vacation** to Kauai, Hawaii, third place is a stunning **diamond Rado watch**, and fourth place is **\$1000.00 cash!!**

No matter what, you're a winner! Tickets are still available!! Raffle drawing to be held at the Spread the Love Gala on February 9th. Channel 2 Chicago News Anchor Rob Johnson will be hosting the event.

Call now to purchase your raffle tickets at only \$25 each or 5 for \$100!!

2008 SPREAD THE LOVE RAFFLE

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____



"SPREAD THE LOVE RAFFLE" to benefit GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

Grand Prize

Exquisite mink coat beautifully altered just for you by renowned designer Hana K!
Graciously donated by Susan and Prosper Maman (Valued at \$15,000)

2nd Prize

1 Week paradise Vacation to Kauai, Hawaii!!
Includes 7 day 6 night stay in a luxurious 2 BR waterfront condo! (Valued at \$6,500)

3rd prize

Stunning Diamond Rado Watch!
Donated by Rahl Jewelers and the Biggers Auto Group (Valued at \$3,000)

4th Prize

\$1000.00 CASH!!

\$25.00 PER TICKET OR 5 FOR \$100.00

GiGi's Playhouses are not for profit Down syndrome awareness centers. With multiple locations we offer activities, resources, educational programs and support for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and the community. At GiGi's Playhouse we celebrate the lives and showcase the talent and potential of individuals with Down syndrome.

Drawing will be held February 9th at our "Spread the Love" Gala at Belvedere Banquets in Elk Grove. Winner need not be present.



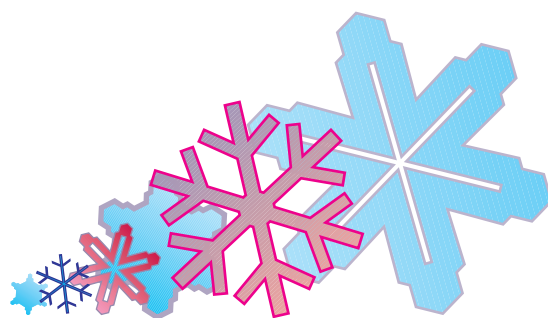
1069 W Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

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Spread the Love Gala

February 9th

Call
847.885.7529
to reserve
your table!



Fa La La La La...

Once again, we were able to join our friends at Friendship Village Retirement Center to spread holiday cheer by singing Christmas Carols!! We had a great time singing and ringing our bells!! This is an annual tradition that is sure to continue forever!!

We sang loud and proud!!



Believe

As the new year starts, so does lots of new schedules!! What better place to write down all your special events and places to go than our 2008 Awareness Calendar! This calendar and its theme BELIEVE is such huge awareness and inspiration, that we are sure you'll love looking at it daily. It has even won an award for design!!! Call the Playhouse to order yours today or go online to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** and click on 'store'.



PARTY TIME

Valentines Day Party
at the Hoffman Estates
Playhouse! **February 16th** —
look inside for more details,
page 2!

RUN WITH US

All 3 Playhouses are joining
forces for this years **5K Run!**
Want to join the 5K committee?
Call **847.885.7529**
or your local Playhouse!