



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

JANUARY 2009



Shower of Hope

When the Playhouse hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Night, they had no idea of the long term impact to come. As Nancy thanked the leaders of Nuestros Angeles, our Spanish-speaking group, she was told about a new mom that just had a baby with Down syndrome. This family had literally no clothes, toys, diapers, or basic needs for the new addition to their family. Nancy immediately got on the phone and called a friend of hers, Karen Cirrincione. Karen put together a party asking for donations of new and gently used kids items. The hope was to get a few toys, blankets, and crib for this new baby. She had no idea that she would be getting so many items that a storage unit would have to be delivered!! 2 weeks later, over 50 people showed up at Karen's house and handed their donated items to Paul Gianni, who dressed in a Santa suit, filled up the storage unit. When the stor-

age unit was delivered to the Playhouse, the Barrington High School Varsity basketball team came over to unload and sort all the items!! Sue Yaeger heard about the need and quickly put together a Shower of Hope at the Kids in Action gym in Barrington. They supplied hundreds of donated items as well!

Wow, What a Holiday Miracle!

It is amazing to see the generosity of all the people involved in helping so many families in need. The goal was to help one family but we are now able to help many more families in need due to the plethora of donations we received! In fact, we are able to share the items with all the Playhouses to give to their families in need.

This is the type of generosity that keeps GiGi's Playhouses going and spreads holiday spirit all year long!!

A Big Thank You — all were needed to make it happen

- The Gianni Family
- Carlos and Blanca Santillan
- Butera Management
- Karen Cirrincione
- MI Box Storage Company
- Barrington High School Varsity Basketball team
- Sue Yaeger
- Kids in Action Gym



Make a Difference in 45 Minutes!

Volunteers are needed as tutors for our Literacy program—we have so many families on a waiting list! Our program is free to our families and helps a child with Down syndrome learn to read the way that they learn best. Each tutoring session runs approximately 45 minutes per child. We will work around your schedule, and the current semester runs through April. Training is provided. Call Susan at **847.885.7529** if you want more information or can help. This could be the best 45 minutes of your week!

Reading Aloud!

We all know how wonderful it is to hear someone reading a story. For some of our children, the use of a talker (augmentative communication device) allows them to hear their words being read. Tony is part of our Learn to Read Literacy program. At 5 years old, he has mastered reading his food unit with the use of his talker. He can hear the sentences as he pushes the buttons: "I want crackers. I want pizza." Tony selects his own reading materials by signing or pushing buttons on his talker. It is so nice to hear his voice! Speech is develop-

ing, and in the meantime Tony and his family use their school-provided talker and sign language to communicate.



Here's what some of our tutors had to say about tutoring....

Be a Literacy volunteer! You will be rewarded with smiles and

laughter as children delight in their success at recognizing words. The program is easy to follow, and the children love the materials. I am having lots of fun with these delightful children!

—Rose



I was so inspired by my son, K.C.'s, ability to learn in the Literacy program that I wanted to be able to help other kids. It is fun, I get to know more kids, and it feels good when they learn new words or signs. It also helps me to learn a lot. It will help you establish a relationship with the students and parents. It is fun and a great experience. Don't to be nervous because these are kids that are in need! They will really benefit from your help.

—Robbie



Jamie & Tina

Jamie and Tina attend Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire. They needed to do a presentation on genetic disorders for an accelerated Biology class, and because they knew students with Down syndrome, they decided to learn more. After researching Down syndrome, the girls placed signs about Down syndrome and GiGi's Playhouse in local restaurants and asked for donations for GiGi's

Playhouse. In a week and a half, the girls raised \$25 for the Playhouse, and spread awareness about Down syndrome to many people in their community!

They followed up with this letter after the project was finished: "The project went really well and our classmates gave positive reactions. A lot of groups just researched and presented. We decided



to go further. When we found your website, we were inspired and wanted to help. We decided to put out jars at local restaurants to raise money and awareness about Down syndrome and GiGi's Playhouse! We really appreciate what GiGi's Playhouse does for children with Down syndrome and the support you give their families. We also think your tutor program is an excellent idea! GiGi is so adorable". Thank you, Jamie and Tina!

Thanksgiving Evening Open Play

Everyone had fun making turkeys at this year's Thanksgiving Evening Open Play. We were all thankful for everyone who came to play.



Hoffman Estates Bookmaking Party!



Help us make books for the upcoming semester of Literacy. Make copies, laminate or use a paper cutter (ages 12 and older, please). Come for the entire day, or a couple of hours, between 9:30am to 2pm.

Please RSVP by calling **847.885.7529** or email at:

svandahm@gigisplayhouse.org

Hop, Skip & Jumpers

This program is designed for 3-5 year olds. It helps promote friendships, enhance social skills and encourages interactive play through fun creative activities such as songs, stories, crafts, cooking and games. We hope to see you there!



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 & Jumpers ♦ This program helps promote friendships, social skills, and interactive play through fun creative activities! For pre-school 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 + 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 Down syndrome how to read the way that they learn best!! This is by appointment only — call your local Playhouse for more info.

Daddy & 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

McHenry Open Play

Open Play is so much fun in McHenry! Join us every Tuesday, from 10am-noon. We have pizza, music, games and enjoy getting to know one another. This time is OPEN to EVERYONE—siblings, parents, grandparents and friends too!



Ellyn

I am a pediatric occupational therapist and have been volunteering at GiGi's Playhouse since September, 2007. From the day I learned about GiGi's Playhouse, I knew it was a unique and special place. I originally found out about GiGi's a few years ago, when searching online for resources for families.

I host the Kids Club Group for the Hoffman Estates GiGi's Playhouse. Kids Club is for 8-12 year. Kids in this age group who do not have Down syndrome are invited and encouraged to attend Kids Club. It is a great opportunity for all the kids to have fun together while increasing their awareness of how much they have in common. This fast-paced group incorporates a wide range of activities such as creative movement, arts & crafts, games, and performance to encourage self-express-

sion, build self-confidence and develop friendships. The atmosphere is enthusiastic and supportive. Some of my key goals are for everyone to have an enjoyable time and to feel comfortable actively participating in the groups.

Volunteering at GiGi's Playhouse has been a very rewarding experience for me. It has been a pleasure getting to know the wonderful children and families. GiGi's Playhouse is a very welcoming, friendly, positive, upbeat place that offers so much to so many.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<h1>january</h1>				1	2	3
	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Literacy 10am-2:15pm Literacy 6-7:30pm	Literacy 1:30-3pm	Special Intentions Meeting 7-9pm	Literacy 11-11:45am Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 4:30-6pm Wendy's Fundraiser 4-8pm Golf & Roselle Rd.		Crawlers/Walkers 9-9:45am 2 & Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers Noon-1:30pm Literacy 3:30-4:45pm
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm	Literacy 10am-2:15pm	Literacy 1:30-3pm	Literacy 10am-2:15pm Literacy 3-5:15pm	Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 4:30-6pm		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Literacy 6-7:30pm Executive Board 6:30-8:30pm	Literacy 1:30-3pm		Literacy 11-11:45am Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 4:30-6pm Wendy's Fundraiser 4-8pm Golf & Roselle Rd.	Friday Friends 7-9pm	Kids Club 10-11:30am Literacy 3:30-5:45pm
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Polish Group 11am-1pm	Literacy 10-2:15pm Hoffman Board of Directors 7-9pm	Literacy 1:30-3pm	Literacy 3-5:15pm Literacy/ Bookmaking 6:30-8:30pm	Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 4:30-6pm		

Wendy's Manager Visits!

We were very excited to have Juan, the Manager from our local Wendy's restaurant, visit Open Play! He brought Frosty's to share, and had lots of fun with the kids. His restaurant hosts our monthly fundraiser for GiGi's Hoffman Estates (corner of Golf and Roselle Road) — we really appreciate his support!



Kids Club Rocks!

Lots of talent showed up for the Hoffman Kids Club Has Talent Show! After we made instruments (rain sticks, tambourines and drums), Sam's mom led us in a sing-a-long to get everyone warmed up. Phenomenal acts during the Talent Show included singers and gymnasts and dancers, and everyone won a "High Five" ribbon!

December 27 is our next Kids Club — all kids ages 8-12 are welcome!

Thanksgiving Party!


The Polish Play group had a Thanksgiving dinner party together! The families enjoyed a great meal and also celebrated Natali's 8th birthday!



Caroling

We had lots of fun caroling with our friends at Friendship Village!



PLAINFIELD						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
january				1 Happy New Year!	2	3
4 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	5 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	6 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	7 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	8 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm Wendy's Fundraiser in Plainfield 5-8pm	9	10
11 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	12 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	13 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	14 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	15 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	16	17
18 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	19 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	20 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	21 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	22 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	23 Evening Open Play 6-8pm RSVP EOP	24 Literacy Program 8:30-Noon Crawlers 9-11am RSVP 630.423.4035
25 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm	26 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	27 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	28 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	29 Literacy Program 4:30-5:30pm	30 	31 Literacy Program 8:30am-Noon

Ripple Effect

We don't always get first hand confirmation on how working with our children affects people and their decisions in life. Just this weekend I had the luck to run into a day care teacher that my son, Ian, had last year. Brandy worked closely with Ian and his therapists to ensure he made the progress that he needed such as eating unassisted and enriching his vocabulary. Ian's therapists always commented to me how she was always asking good questions on how to assist Ian and really seemed to enjoy working with him. Brandy stopped working at Ian's Daycare just before he turned



three, and we certainly felt the loss. It was only this weekend that we ran into her and she informed us that she had left the daycare to continue her education, which was a direct result of her working with Ian. Brandy has decided to pursue her degree in Special Education and I can't be happier than to know that other children will also get the benefit of her empathy, concern and love in the future. It's things like this that make me proud to have Ian and realize how important a role he plays in everyday life. Everyone can be enriched by the joy of working with a special needs child, make certain you give them the opportunity whenever you can!

Evening Open Play

Join us on **Fri., January 23rd** making valentines! We'll have pizza, play and create valentines during our play time at 6pm. RSVP to Genia at: glatka@gigisplayhouse.org



We Are Moving!

Our Plainfield Playhouse is moving into our new location early 2009, and will be suspending activities to facilitate the move. We hope to resume activities at our new location on **January 19th**. We'll be located next to the Fox Valley Mall (behind Toys 'R Us)!!

Our Wishlist:

Carpentry help, donated carpet and/or tile, mural painting and more!!

Call the Playhouse if you can help, **630.778.PLAY**

Wendy's Fundraiser

Second Thursday of every month located at the corner of 59 and 134th street in Plainfield.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<p>january</p> <p>Happy New Year!</p>				1	2	3 Literacy 1:30-2:30pm
4 Nuestros Angles Hispanic Playgroup 10am-Noon	5 Literacy 4-6pm	6 Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 3:15-7pm Wendy's Night 5-8pm	7 Literacy 4-7pm	8 Literacy 10-11am Literacy 1:30-2:30pm	9 Sign 'til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Please RSVP Teen-Tastic 7pm	10 2 & under 10:30am-Noon Literacy 1:30-2:30pm
11 Literacy 4-6pm	12 Literacy 4-6pm	13 Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 3:15-7pm	14 Literacy 4-7pm	15 Options & Advocacy Playgroup 10-11:30am Literacy 10-11am Literacy 1:30-2:30pm	16 Sign 'til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Please RSVP Friday Friends 6:30pm Kid's Club 6:30pm	17 Literacy 1:30-2:30pm
18 Literacy 4-6pm	19 Literacy 4-6pm	20 Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 3:15-7pm	21 Literacy 4-7pm	22 Literacy 10-11am Literacy 1:30-2:30pm	23 Sign 'til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Please RSVP Friday Friends (18 & older) 7pm	24 Skill Builder 1pm Literacy 1:30-2:30pm
25 Daddy & Me 9-11am	26 Literacy 4-6pm	27 Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 3:15-7pm	28 Literacy 4-7pm	29 Literacy 10-11am Literacy 1:30-2:30pm Bookmaking/Make n' Take Night 6:30pm	30 Sign 'til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Please RSVP	31 Hop, Skip & Jumpers 10-11:30am Private Reading Group 1:30pm Literacy 1:30-2:30pm

What a Volunteer!

Fun loving, animated, courageous, kind, caring, passionate... all simple words to describe an incredibly dynamic volunteer at the McHenry Playhouse, Mr. Rusty Davis. Rusty has been a special contributor to our community right from our grassroots beginning when he jumped on board offering to help with construction and even provided the carpeting and installation from his business. He continues monthly to inspire all of us during our Wendy's Night Fundraiser, where he enthusiastically approaches each and every guest to share the good news of our mission to spread the love, handing out bookmarks and keychains to everyone. Recently he showed up to repair some lighting and stayed to put together a doll house and the Christmas tree too! Rusty, we truly value your contributions and share a great big GiGi's hug, THANK YOU!



Literacy Skills Seminar was a Success!

As parents, sometimes the task of teaching our kids how to read can seem overwhelming. There are so many programs, curriculums, games... where do we start? Enter Jeri Lynn Reid, 15-year special education veteran and a bottomless well of experience, ideas, and encouragement. Jeri walked in off the street and volunteered to be a literacy tutor in May of 2008 and also graciously offered to put together an afternoon seminar focused on literacy from birth through adulthood. Incidental learning, environmental learning, the importance of reading to our kids and exposing them to written language every day...simple ideas with big impact. Different learning materials were discussed and then during the second half of the seminar, the parents had the opportunity to actually make



those materials themselves to take home and try with their kids. Jeri was available for questions and concerns — everything from how to deal with teachers who won't use sign language to how to help a child learn to read and understand a schedule. We will definitely have more seminars like this in the future! A big thanks to Jeri!

Eat at Wendy's & Help GiGi's
January 6th, 5-8pm
 McHenry Wendy's
 2433 N. Richmond Rd.
 (by the Home Depot)

New Year Dinner at Applebee's
January 23rd at 7pm
 Friday Friends will meet at the Playhouse and we'll walk next door to ring in the New Year. RSVP to the Playhouse **815.385.7529** to be included in the reservations!

Jan. 23rd

CHICAGO						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
january				1 Happy New Year!	2	3 Open Play 10:15-11:30am
4 Yoga 10:30-11am Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Group 11:15am-1:15pm	5 Literacy 1-7pm	6 Literacy 4-7pm	7 Literacy 11am-5:30pm	8 Open Play 11:30am-1pm Literacy 3-7pm	9	10 Playhouse Pals 11:15am-12:45pm
11 Yoga 10:30-11am	12 Literacy 1-7pm	13 Literacy 4-7pm	14 Literacy 11am-5:30pm	15 Literacy 3-7pm	16	17 Open Play 10:15-11:30am Kids Club Noon-1:30pm
18 Yoga 10:30-11am	19 Literacy 1-7pm	20 Literacy 4-7pm	21 Literacy 11am-5:30pm Volunteer Night 6:30-8:30pm New Parent Packet Creation	22 Open Play 11:30am-1pm Literacy 3-7pm	23	24 Crawlers 10-10:45am 2 & under 11am-12:15pm Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12:30-2pm
25 Yoga 10:30-11am	26 Literacy 1-7pm	27 Literacy 4-7pm	28 Literacy 11am-5:30pm	29 Literacy 3-7pm	30	31 Shackley Party 2-5pm

Richard's Birthday Party @ the Playhouse – aka "The Dark Party"

I decided that the Chicago Playhouse would be a great place to celebrate Richard's 3rd birthday. It's a big year for him, "graduating" early intervention, starting pre-school and turning 3! Having it at GiGi's was a great success! We decided to invite everyone....over 40 people made it to the party. We invited all of Richard's pals, including two families of young children with Down syndrome who had never been to the Playhouse. Throughout the party parents kept commenting on what a great



place GiGi's is and what a wonderful environment for the party. The unexpected part of the day came right before the party started. All of a sudden the lights went out in the neighborhood! So, when you get lemons you make lemonade, right? The party must go on! Even though we had no music and not much light the kids had a blast and didn't seem to mind the "intimate" setting.

GiGi's Playhouse has been so important to our family. It meant so much to be able to introduce it to many people that otherwise would not have known

about the Playhouse. Thanks GiGi's for a wonderful time!

If you are interested in hosting a party at the Playhouse please contact us to schedule the date. We'll provide the invitations!



New Campaign

GiGi's Playhouse Chicago is kicking off a year-long fundraising campaign. We understand that during these tough economic times it is difficult to give \$100, or even \$10. What we are asking each Playhouse family to do is help raise funds by receiving pledges from school mates, colleagues, neighbors, friends and family. Our campaign

goal is to raise \$50,000 in 2009. All of the funds raised will go to support the operating costs and programs of GiGi's Playhouse Chicago. Our goal may seem lofty, but when you consider the number of families attending the Playhouse, monthly donations of just \$20 add up to a significant amount at year end. While we have been blessed with volunteers to keep our programs running, we need donations to keep

our doors open. Fundraising ideas will be provided in each monthly newsletter. For more information about our fundraising campaign, please contact the Chicago Playhouse.

Save the Date
Game Night
April 23, 2009



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

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save the date
Spread the Love Gala
Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009



Santa Visits GiGi's Playhouse

More than 30 families were having a great time eating breakfast together and singing Christmas carols when Santa surprised us with a visit!

3rd Annual Spread the Love Gala

**7pm on Saturday
February 7, 2009**

Register online now at:
www.gigisplayhouse.org
RSVP by **January 15th**,
space is limited!




Holiday Raffle

Our annual raffle has started!! Call your local Playhouse for raffle tickets! Prizes include exotic trips, jewelry and cash! Tickets are \$100. Please go to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** or call to purchase your lucky ticket!

Locations

Hoffman Estates
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

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