

**Hoffman Estates** 1069 West Golf Road Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

Fox Valley 630.778.PLAY 4024 Fox Valley Drive Aurora, IL 60504

McHenry 815.385.PLAY 1720 N. Richmond Road McHenry, IL 60050 **Chicago** 773.583.PLAY 3660 West Irving Park Road Chicago, IL 60618

Sioux City 712.226.PLAY 1551 Indian Hills Drive, Suite 7 Sioux City, IA 51104

www.gigisplayhouse.org

GiGi's News

October 2009

### **Celebrating Down Syndrome Awareness Month!**

As you know, GiGi's Playhouses are Down syndrome awareness centers. While we offer educational programs, therapeutic activities, and lots of support to families and friends touched by Down syndrome, our main goal is to spread positive, and accurate awareness about what Down syndrome is and what it is not. That is why we particularly love the month of October as it is Down syndrome awareness month!! We often get asked how you can help in spreading awareness with

it is Down syndrome awareness month!! We often get asked how you can help in spreading awareness with

us. There are so many ways so we asked our families what their favorite way to spread awareness is and here are some of their responses:

"My child is 5, so I like to spread awareness to his peers and teachers. I use the GiGi's Playhouse activity books to do a talk with his class. They get to have fun with the booklet all while learning about Down syndrome! I feel like I am helping raise a generation of compassionate bids!"



"I pass out the GiGi's calendars and brochures to my doctor's offices, grocery store, schools and where I work!"

"We work hard to have our daughter with Down syndrome reach her dreams. She wants to be independent – so she goes to school, has a job and goes out with friends – just like we do! What a great way to show the world that she can reach her dreams too!"

There are so many other stories that we can share with you! If you are looking for a way to help spread awareness this month or throughout the entire year, call your local Playhouse and they will give you some ideas. Anything from tutoring in the literacy program, to bringing the *i have a voice* Gallery to your local library, to simply using correct terminology when speaking about individuals with Down syndrome—the opportunities are endless! Join us in making this world a better place for all! With your help, we can spread awareness all year long!

# i have a voice

#### IT'S BACK IN TOWN!

For the month of October, the *i have a voice* Traveling Gallery will be hosted by the St. Alexius Hospital in Hoffman Estates. We are so excited to have this awesome venue display our larger than life portraits of individuals with Down syndrome! Imagine the impact it will have on the new mom that just delivered a baby with Down syndrome and sees these beautiful and intelligent images as she leaves the

hospital. Or the corporate executives that walk by the Gallery and can't help but find themselves drawn to the quotes under each picture. Or the medical staff that get to see a side of Down syndrome that reminds them to share positive and accurate information as they deliver a diagnosis.

Karen Meyer from Channel 7 will be there on October 9th to write a story on the Gallery and its impact across the nation. Be sure to check the web-



site for details of when it will air!

Take your family to Alexius through-

out the month of October to view the Gallery and it's incredible impact!

# One Hour Makes a Difference!

Can you spare one hour a week?
Tutors are needed for our Literacy program — you can make a huge difference in the life of a child by helping their reading and comprehension skills through our Literacy program. We have many kids on a waiting list!
Training provided, email

literacydirector@gigisplayhouse.org to find out more.

# Literacy Corner

# Partnership with Roosevelt University

Roosevelt University Community Involvement Coordinator Vinny welcomed Brett to the Schaumburg campus to announce Roosevelt's sponsorship of GiGi's Playhouse for the academic year. In addition to fundraising for the Playhouse, students will volunteer as Literacy tutors and assist during programs — what a great partnership!



#### **Peotone School District Training**

On August 13th we held an informational session/training for Peotone School District at Peotone Elementary in Chicago. Everyone from kindergarten teachers, high school teachers, therapist, parents, and administrators attended this event. We discussed accommodations and modifications for

the classroom and school grounds. We also touched on literacy strategies and testing accommodations. Everyone was able to share their experiences and ideas for working with children with Down syndrome. We all took away a little something new to help start off the new school year with a bang!

I greatly enjoyed working with Peotone School District and their parents! If your child's teacher or therapist is looking for ways to support him/her in school invite them to our Open House at the Hoffman Estates location September 29th at 6pm. Hope to see you there!

#### **Christine Enjoys Friday Friends**

One of the great things about the Playhouse is the amazing people who make GiGi's feel like a big family. Christine is one of those people. She is part of our Friday Friends group, and a lot of fun! We asked Christine to tell us



a little about herself.

"I'm 32 years old. I am an usher at a theater and have worked there for 8 years. I take tickets, tell customers which theater to go to, and enter information on the computer. One of my hobbies is sketching. I always have a sketch book and pencil with me wherever I go. I play Quiddler (card game) and UNO all the time, and love playing my Wii, especially bowling, tennis and soccer. I'm always talking on the phone to my boyfriend, and having friends over for girls weekends. I belong to Evanston Athletic Club and I like Water Aerobics, Nia and Zumba classes. I just taught a Zumba class at the NDSC Convention in Sacramento!

I try to never miss Friday Friends at GiGi's Playhouse! I get to see so many friends and meet new friends, too. My advice to Playhouse parents and students — study hard — teach children to read and do math! I had a great teacher when it was time for me to learn to read and do math. I took extra classes to learn and went to NWSRA activities. Camp was important; I went to day camp and I also went to a week-long camp, it taught me a lot. Special Olympics helped me learn sports and how to travel without my parents. In junior high, I was on the cross country team. My friends from all these things that I did when I was little are my best friends today, too."

#### **Programs & Activities**

To view a full description of our programs, go to our website: www.gigisplayhouse.org

**2 & Under Playgroup** • Children play while their parents network with each other.

**Crawlers** • Focuses on crawling, fine motor skills and social interaction with peers.

**Walkers** • Focuses on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities.

Hop, Skip & Jumpers ◆ Promote friendships, social skills, and interactive play through fun creative activities! (3-5 year olds)

Playhouse Pals • Structured playgroup focus-

es on developing friendships and confidence all while having a great time! (6-8 year olds)

**Kids Club** ◆ Fast paced group incorporates social, communication and confidence-building skills and activities! (9-12 year olds)

**Teen-Tastic** ◆ Pizza party of watching movies and playing games. (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!

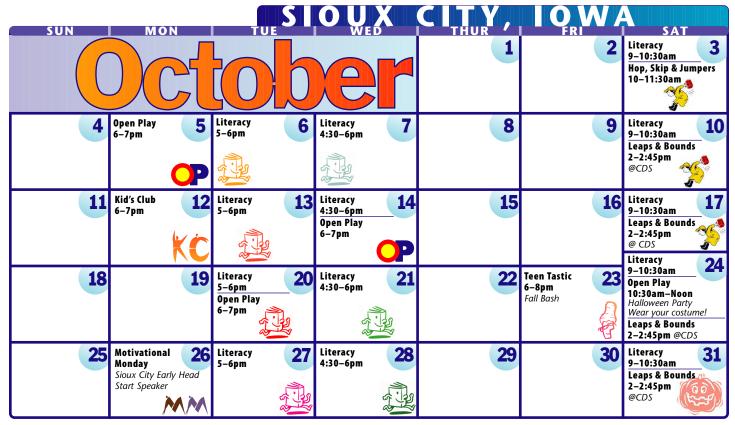
**Polish Group** ◆ Polish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education!

**Open Play** • Everyone welcome to this weekly gathering of networking and friendship building.

**Literacy** Free program teaches kids how to read. By appointment only — Call ahead!

**Daddy & Me** ◆ Dads, bring your kids and meet other fathers in your area!

**Reserve it!** Playhouses can be reserved for any function or other special needs group.



#### **Raising Awareness**

The 2009 Walk for Down Syndrome Awareness was a HUGE success! We had over a 1000 participants with 75% of the proceeds

going to GiGi's Playhouse-





Sioux City! Everyone had fun playing in the kid zone with bounce houses, slides, games, crafts, food and so much more! It is always so great to see the line of walkers as the Walk begins with

all the yellow and blue bal-



loons making a path! Thank you to all the sponsors who played a HUGE role in making this day happen!

Please visit the "Sioux City section" at **www.gigisplayhouse.org** for a complete list of sponsors! We couldn't have done it without your dedication and support!!

#### Follow Us...

Follow us on **www.twitter.com** at GiGisPlayhouse! Updates on events right to you! Become a FAN of GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux City on Facebook! Go to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** and click on Sioux City!

#### She's a Calendar Girl!

We are excited to announce our very own Sioux City Calendar Girl, Olivia Bargstadt! Olivia & her family went to Chicago last February for the photo shoot and made the 2010 GiGi's Playhouse Calendar! Olivia is 4 years old, attends Dakota Valley Elementary School, loves to play with her siblings, ride bikes, read books, etc. Olivia is involved in the GiGi's Literacy Program, Leaps & Bounds, Hop, Skip & Jumpers, and Open Play groups. Calendars can be purchased at your local Playhouse or online at

www.gigisplayhouse.org

#### A Chance to Dance

We are so excited to have Contemporary Dance Studio (CDS) involved with GiGi's Playhouse. CDS is located at Suite 6 in Indian Hills Plaza; right next door to GiGi's Playhouse! The owner, Jessica Jensen, will be donating her time and talents to provide a special 6 week session for anyone age 3 and up with Down syndrome. The weekly sessions will take place during our Leaps & Bounds class on Saturdays from **2-2:45pm**, **Oct. 10 to Nov. 14** 

with a mini recital on **November 14th**. There is no cost for the classes, but there will be a small costume fee. We are so excited to have all of our kids at GiGi's Playhouse show off their



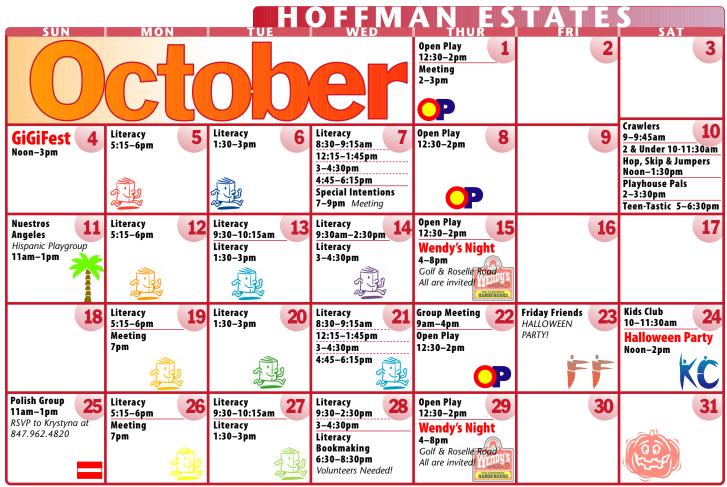
talents! If you are interested, email siouxcity@gigis-playhouse.org or call 712.226.PLAY to be a part of

the FUN!

#### Fall Fun!

Come to Open Play on **Sat., Oct. 24th** from **10:30am-Noon**, for a Halloween

themed morning! Don't forget your Halloween costume to wear to the Party! Siblings are always welcome!



#### **Hoffman Cookbook**

GiGi's Playhouse Hoffman Estates has exciting news! We are going to have our own cookbook! And you can help make it a great one! We want to collect recipes from all of our Hoffman families and volunteers.... so pull out your favorites and send them in! Cookbooks will be sold for \$10 to raise funds for the Hoffman Estates Playhouse. They will be ready for Christmas and will make great gifts! Go to the Hoffman page on the website for more info.

#### **Friday Friends**

Our softball game and ice cream social were a blast! Don't miss our Halloween Party on **October 23rd!** 





#### **Polish Group**

Our Polish group meets on the fourth Sunday of each month from 11am–1pm. Join us on **October 25!** RSVP to Krystyna at **847.962.4820**.



# Hop, Skip & Jumpers and Playhouse Pals

Buccaneers will be walking the plank into GiGi's Playhouse for a true Pirate adventure this month! Join the fun on **October 10th!** 

#### Kids Club Went Flying at Elk Grove Gymnastics School!

Yes, everyone got harnessed in and "flew" very high in the air (with ropes

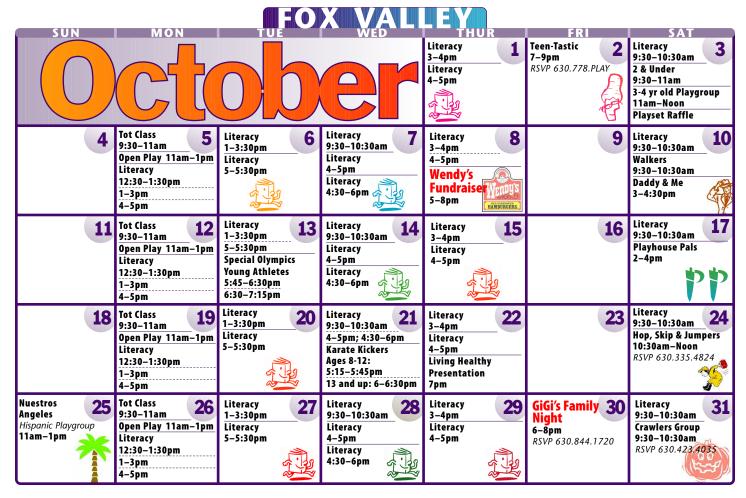


holding them up)!!! We did some warm-up stretches, went through a cool obstacle course, did trampoline activities and jumped into the "foam block pit". Marc J showed us some of his awesome rings routine!



#### **Calling All Chicagoland Teens!**

We will be shaking fall loose with an autumn themed dance & teen social! Join us for karaoke, dancing, ice breakers & the chance to meet other teens in your area! Bring a friend, 5–6:30pm on **October 10th**!



#### **Lives With Full Potential**

A group of volunteers from Wheatland-Salem church came to help create literacy



books and materials. Within that group was an editor for a local newspaper. As we talked about GiGi's, the already generous group started offering more ways they could help – including an offer to write a feature story about our organization in the newspaper.

The article was recently featured in both the Beacon News and the Naperville Sun. Since the article went to print, we've had a significant increase in awareness, volunteer contacts, vocational partnerships and possible grants and sponsorship opportunities!

What a way to spread awareness about Down syndrome! A big Thank You to the Beacon News

and Naperville Sun for their help in spreading awareness!

#### **Upcoming Events...**

GiGi's Playhouse-Fox Valley is teaming up with Carson Pirie Scott in the Community Days fundraiser. GiGi's Playhouse-Fox Valley will be selling coupon booklets at \$5 each. Each booklet contains a \$10 coupon good on almost any merchandise item of \$10 or more (customers spend \$5 for the booklet and get \$10 back on their first purchase!), eight coupons for up to 20% off, plus offers for two great bonus items—available on Community Day only. Coupon booklets are at the Playhouse, contact Genia at **glatka@gigisplayhouse.org**.

#### Special Olympics Young Athletes Program is an Inspiration

In August, 27 children from GiGi's Fox Valley ages 2-7 and their siblings participated in the culminating event for the Special Olympics Young Athletes program. They completed eight events in order to earn their medal and certificate. Thanks to the My Gym in Fox Valley for their ongoing commitment to host the program. It is a real treat for the kids to be in such a wonderful facility. We also had 12 awesome teen volunteers from

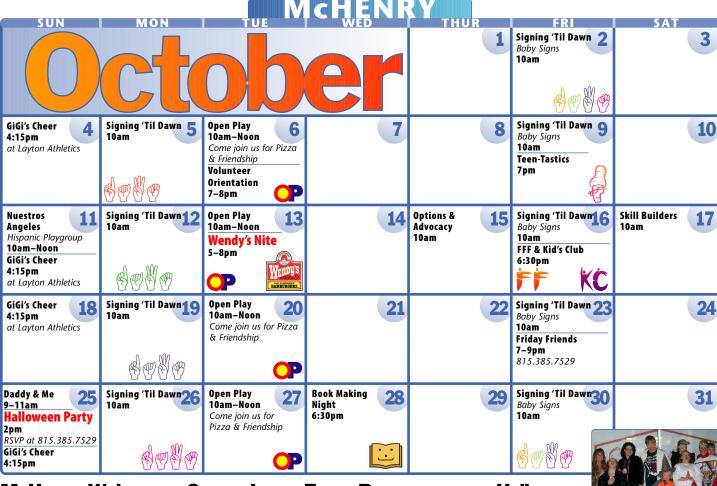
Nazareth High School who assisted the children that day. One volunteer, Katie said "Even though it was hard work getting through all the events, it was so cool to see Evan smile." Special thanks to Jen Marcello from SO who facilitated the event and Sandy DeCraene, our coach. We have 33 children already signed up for the fall session and we are excited to introduce some new skills and welcome some new faces!

## **Living Healthy Presentation**

Please join us on **October 22nd at 7pm** and learn how Robert Bagdonas,

an adult with Down syndrome, has created his own successful business, even in a down economy.





#### McHenry Welcomes Our NEW Site Coordinator — Jean Boyle

I am so very excited to join the GiGi's Playhouse family, I feel very lucky to be part of an organization that does such wonderful work. My past experience working with adults with multiple disabilities in a vocational setting will hopefully help me to be able to spread awareness on how GiGi's Playhouse can make a difference.

I look forward to meeting everyone in the near future!

#### **Jeans For a Reason**

Thanks to The Alder Company,
Debra Alder, and all the employees for
your continued support in all of our
fundraising efforts and for wearing
jeans on Fridays...... Jeans For a Reason.
Last year at the Delavan, Wisconsin
office of the Alder Company they started wearing jeans on Fridays and paying
for it! Everyone who wears jeans must
pay \$1.00 per week and the money is
given and matched by the company to
GiGi's Playhouse McHenry.

having a "normal" child were shattered by the news that Jake would have Down syndrome. As we wiped away the tears and moved forward, we discovered a whole new experience with incredibly talented and gifted people and their caring parents. It was a busy year for Jake as we adjusted to having a third child in the home and we wouldn't have changed a thing. Each stage of development turned into a celebration and awareness of who he is and what he can do. I asked my husband Joe if he ever wondered what Jake would be like if Jake didn't have Down syndrome.

# Halloween Party!

Wear your costumes and Come Join us on **Sunday, Oct. 25th** for a fun filled Halloween Party from **2-4pm**. We will play games, crafts and snacks. Please RSVP to the Playhouse at **815.385.7529** or **mchenry@gigisplayhouse.org**.

#### Join Us at Wendy's

Please join us at Wendy's on Tues., Oct. 13th from 5-8pm. A portion of all proceeds go back to the Playhouse.

#### **Another Party!**

Thank you for allowing Jakie to enjoy his special day at GiGi's Playhouse. Everyone had a wonderful



time. The older children played games, we ate yummy cake and many friends joined us to celebrate the joys of his first year of life. Whoever knew that about 15 months ago, our dreams of



His answer was simply "He wouldn't be Jake." We are so thankful for our special little miracle!

**(6** 



#### Rachel, Our Intern

The Chicago Playhouse wants to thank our site coordinator intern, Rachel Zinn for her service this summer. Rachel is a student at Northwestern University where she is majoring in Human Development and Pyschological Services, with a minor in Psychology. In addition to her studies, Rachel is beginning her second year as an RA and is involved with University chorus, STAND (a student anti-genocide coalition) and various activities in the school's Jewish community. Thank you Rachel! We are happy to have you as part of our "family".

#### **Motivational Mondays!**

Nutritionist to talk about moving beyond sensory issues with early feeders, fighting obesity in young adults and children, creating a balanced diet and motivating picky eaters to eat a more well rounded diet. Check the website for date.

#### **Movie Night**

The Chicago Playhouse is hosting it's second monthly Movie Night on **October 30th** at **7pm**. It will be a Halloween theme so dress up in your favorite costume and come on by for fun, food and some eerie excitement!

#### 2 & Under Playgroup

The 2 & Under Playgroup provides a



setting where young children with Down syndrome and their families can

meet, play and learn. Kids get a chance to interact and socialize with each other while the parents get a chance to network, share their triumphs and troubles and just sit back and relax and watch their kids play.

Jack Leto and his grandmother visited the Playhouse for the first time. He played with Jack Delaney at the 2 &

Under group.



#### Live Band Karaoke at Taste of GiGi's!!



If you've never done Live Band Karaoke, now's your chance! It's way more fun than the typical kind and it's all for GiGi's Playhouse Chicago! Join us on **Oct. 24th** at **5pm** in Logan Square for good food, better drinks, and the best singing around! Go to

www.gigisplayhouse.org to register — invite your friends and family, this is an event you don't want to miss!



Hoffman Estates 1069 W. Golf Road Hoffman Estates, IL 60169 NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SCHAUMBURG, IL
PERMIT NO. 93

#### **Save These Dates**

- **Oct. 4th @** Hoffman Playhouse GiGiFest Everyone Invited!!
- Oct. 24th @ Chicago Playhouse 2nd Annual Taste of GiGi's and Live Band Karaoke
- Nov. 1st @ McHenry Playhouse

  2nd Annual Fashion Show & Brunch
- Feb. 6, 2010 GiGi's Gala

To learn more about all of these events and to register, go to: www.gigisplayhouse.org

#### Thank You UPS!!!

Thanks for the \$15,000 grant that your provided to GiGi's for Literacy! We are so grateful that you see the poten-

tial in individuals with Down syndrome and the work that GiGi's is doing!

Mickey gladly accepts the check!





#### **2nd Annual Fashion Show**

It's just around the corner... there is still time to get in on the FASHION. Join us **Sunday**, **November 1st** at the Bull Valley Golf Club 1311 Club Road, Woodstock, IL for Fashion, Fun & a wonderful brunch. Register online at **www.gigisplayhouse.org** or call the McHenry Playhouse at **815.385.7529** to participate, sponsor or to purchase tickets.



# Join Us Oct. 4th for GiGiFest Our 6th Anniversary Celebration! Noon-3pm

- Bounce Houses
- Petting Zoo
- Ronald McDonald
- Pony Rides
- Our 2010 Calendar Models!



## Live Band Karaoke at Taste of GiGi's!!

If you've never done Live Band Karaoke, now's your chance! It's way more fun than the typical



kind and it's all for GiGi's Playhouse Chicago! Join us on **Oct. 24th** at **5pm** in Logan Square for good food, better drinks, and the best singing around! Go to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** to register — invite your friends and family, this is an event you don't want to miss!