



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

June 2010 Newsletter

www.gigisplayhouse.org
info@gigisplayhouse.org

Hoffman Estates Location
1069 W. Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
847.885.PLAY (7529)

Chicago Location
3660 W. Irving Park Rd.
Chicago, IL 60618
773.583.PLAY (7529)

Fox Valley Location
4024 Fox Valley Center Dr.
Aurora, IL 60504
630.778.PLAY (7529)

Sioux City Location
1551 Indian Hills Drive,
Suite 7
Sioux City, Iowa 51104
712.226.PLAY (7529)

McHenry Location
5404 W. Elm St. Suite A.
McHenry, IL 60050
815.385.PLAY (7529)

Des Moines Location
10430 New York Ave
Suite A
Urbandale, IA 50322



Lucky number 7!!

The 7th Playhouse is up and coming in Rockford, IL! It will be opening just in time for Down Syndrome Awareness month this October!! One of the individuals spearheading this mission is Penny, and her inspiration is her grandson, Landon.

"On July 15, 2009 we were blessed with our 4th grandchild. Our son and daughter-in-law, Nathan and Courtney had no idea their second child would be born with Down

syndrome. We were all caught totally off guard. I decided from the beginning that we were blessed with Landon for a reason. My husband and I decided that we were going to do something with our blessing - be it big or small!! My niece lives in Barrington and immediately told us about GiGi's Playhouse. She told us about the upcoming GiGiFest so we attended. We were so excited to see all the kids and how well they were doing. Hal and I looked at each other and said, "This is it!" We are so excited to bring a GiGi's to Rockford for Landon and all the other individuals with Down syndrome, thier families and the community. Thank you to CDC/ Easter Seals for hosting our first informational meeting. We are off and running, blazing the GiGi's trail in Rockford!!

Interested in helping, sponsorships, or programs? Email Rockford@gigisplayhouse.org

Opening October 2010!!

GiGi's Rockford
8801 N. 2nd St.
Machesney Park, Il 61115



It's not too late!

Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to register, donate, or volunteer for the 5K on June 13th!!



Thanks Riggio Family

Thanks Riggio Family!

Steve Riggio, former CEO and current Vice Chairman of Barnes and Noble, has given a generous donation to GiGi's Playhouse New York! The check was presented to Nancy Gianni and the GiGi's NYC Board of Directors at the NDSS luncheon in New York City! The luncheon was inspiring as self advocate Jennifer Hinds received the Melissa Riggio Voices Award, Nancy shared how the Playhouse touches lives, and as we celebrated the bringing of GiGi's Playhouse to New York!



Jenni with some of the NY BOD members!

Close of a Semester Reflections From a Chicago Tutor

As Jake comes to the end of his first semester in GiGi's Literacy Program, his tutor, Rachel reflects on her 16 weeks with him...

"I have really enjoyed working with Jake this session. He is always happy to arrive at GiGi's, gets a big smile on his face & dashes in. We started with a custom "family" book & cards we made him, and he is becoming a pro at selecting the correct picture when asked. He likes to watch Barney at home and does very well with the Barney flashcards. We have also been working on colors, using signs, toys & objects around the room as well as the cards. He is doing great at identifying the correct keys on the color-coded piano for me. When it's time to play he's excited to move all around in the open room, use the slide, & play catch."

Congratulations on completing your first semester with us, Jake!



Hopping, Skipping, and Jumping...

Arguably, the greatest benefit of our programming at GiGi's is that each program overlaps and reinforces other parts of the four main program categories: positive beginnings, therapeutic movement, social skill development and educational programming. A few weeks ago, I was able to participate in a Hop, Skip and Jumpers class. Designed for children ages 3-5, this program employs children in active and engaging theme-centered lessons, while developing gross and fine motor skills, muscle tone and educational skill. I watched in delight and amazement for an hour and a half as children three and four years old sang, danced, made art, and learned about the weather, all while reinforcing their knowledge of colors and numbers. It was delightful to watch children sing, dance, and learn a variety of new colors and words- all while having fun, increasing social skills and fostering new and existing friendships.

Hop, Skip and Jumpers is one of the many programs which illustrate what makes the programming at GiGi's first-class: the energy, love and commitment of volunteers, families and the community to a child-centered, far-reaching and cross-categorical education and development- all while having a blast!



THANK YOU, ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY!!

Students and professors from Roosevelt University spent two days at the Hoffman Playhouse! The University was built on Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt's dedication to social justice and community involvement and is committed to giving back to the community, and they chose to volunteer at the Hoffman Playhouse!

At a Leadership Awards Ceremony at Roosevelt, Vinny, who has worked so hard for the Playhouse, was honored as Volunteer of the Year! Roosevelt also presented a \$4700 check to the Playhouse, thanks to the tireless fundraising efforts of Vinny and other Roosevelt students!



Vinny's time, dedication, and enthusiasm is very much appreciated! He is an advocate for GiGi's Playhouse and tutors 12 kids in our Literacy program this semester! Katie, Mickey's mom, said, "Thank you for everything you do, you inspire us all and we really appreciate you being a part of our team. As a parent of one of your Literacy students I hope you realize how important the literacy tutoring sessions are for our kids. The program gives us the tools to teach our kids how to read - that is a gift that can never be taken away. Having trained volunteers like you is so necessary in jump starting literacy for our children. Thank you for your time and caring way with Mickey - he loves you!"



Sioux City, Iowa

CAMP LITERACY

will be on Thursday, June 17 from 9:30-11:30am! This exciting camp will have lots of games, crafts and incorporate literacy, phonics, letters & numbers! All ages welcome and invited! RSVP to siouxcity@gigisplayhouse.org. Check out our GROUP LITERACY times also!! You don't have to be a student in the Literacy program to attend!



Join us at Wine Styles on Fri, July 30 for a wine tasting fundraiser from 5-8pm \$20 per person. 712-226-PLAY to register or you can purchase tickets at the door.

Fantastic Job by the **Leaps & Bounds Dance** performance on May 22! The group did an awesome job on stage performing! If you are interested in being in the upcoming session please email us! Thank You CDS for a great recital!!



Join us at Chili's Restaurant on Sun, June 13; have dinner; tell them you would like to donate to GiGi's Playhouse! GiGi's Sioux City will earn a portion of your receipt! THANK YOU!!

Des Moines

It's Official!

The Grand opening was fabulous! We are so excited to have a GiGi's Playhouse in Des Moines! This new Playhouse was celebrated on May 22nd with the entire community coming to see what all the excitement was about! GiGi herself made an appearance and thanked all her friends in Des Moines for helping spread awareness in Iowa about Down syndrome in such a positive way!

One of the founding BOD members shares her story, "Currently I serve on the board for GiGi's Playhouse as the Secretary. My husband Andrew and I have a daughter Adreanna (Anna) who just turned 2. Anna is a loving little girl

that loves to dance and sing, she can be a little shy most of the time she likes to give other kids hugs and kisses. We are very excited about the opening of the GiGi's playhouse, this is a great opportunity for our kids to learn, play, and develop the skills that they will need throughout life."

Thanks to Anna, Megan and all the other amazing BOD members, volunteers, sponsors and families for making the dream of bringing a GiGi's Playhouse to Des Moines a reality!!

Hoffman Estates

Thanks Rita!

Rita is one of our amazing Hoffman tutors who love to help our kids improve their reading skills! She brings great experience to her role as a tutor – her granddaughter, Hayden, was our youngest student ever in the Literacy program! Hayden started when she was 2 years old!

“We made a game of it – you have to keep a child motivated and make it fun, and then they want to read! It works with Hayden and it works with other kids that I tutor here at GiGi’s.” Hayden is 3 ½ now, and the entire family does everything possible to help her improve her skills. Rita loves to come to the Playhouse

to tutor and work with other children, and she is able to carry that knowledge back home with her to help



Hayden even more. Rita didn’t know anything about Down syndrome before Hayden was born, and said, “The Literacy program is just wonderful! When I tutor, the kids are no different than any other child – they are learning how to read, and like any other child, trying to function in this world. The Playhouse is a solid place with a Literacy Program that works!”



Kids Club and Roosevelt University Lend a Helping Hand!

The April theme for Kids Club was “Lending a Helping Hand”. A group of Roosevelt University students worked with Kids Club on a variety of projects for

the Playhouse. They also had lots of fun together! We love our relationship with Roosevelt University - they have helped the Playhouse in so many ways!

FRIDAY FRIENDS

JAM SESSION WAS A BLAST!

Friday Friends invited Rick Renner and friends to join them for their annual jam session!

We all look forward to this fun night full of music and talent! Everyone had a great time and the place was rocking!

June 25 - BBQ Night at Roberta’s house!!



Hop, Skip and Jumpers and Playhouse Pals

June 12 – we are having a picnic! Rain or shine!

Family Night

June 4, 6:30-8:30 pm

McHenry



Literacy!

Summer session will run from June 21st through August 13th, please return your completed forms to the playhouse.

Re- Grand Opening!!

The Grand Re-Opening was a huge success... attended by almost 300 people! The rainy day didn’t put a damper on the fun. The Flying Dragons did a wonderful

presentation; Layton Athletics came out with the Cheer team and performed for everyone and the kids enjoyed all the games and bouncy house as well! We welcomed several new families to the Playhouse and each one was amazed by the warmth and hominess of the new building. Thank you to the McHenry Fire Department for bringing out the big engine for the kids to see. How fortunate we are to have such a great group of volunteers and thank you to everyone who helped make the day such a success.



well as many private therapists. We had 25 people attend during the afternoon. Everyone was impressed with the playhouse set-up, the variety of activities but most of all, with the quality of services we provide without charging our families. One attendee wants to start a drama group this summer and a pair of therapists want to start a

speech/social group!

Educators and Therapists Open House!

We hosted our first Educators and Therapists Open House in early April. We invited the teachers, administrators and therapist from the schools in McHenry County as



We're doing a little summer rearranging.

In keeping with GiGi's overall mission to educate, inspire, achieve we're in the process of recasting the Chicago Playhouse and its programs. The focus of GiGi's in 2010 is academic programming. As we look for a space that's more conducive to our focus on learning, we will be moving temporarily for the summer – just 3 blocks west of the current Playhouse!

Check out our calendar for new times and programs! We will continue to have a full literacy schedule, Open Play Lunchtime every Wednesday from 11:00am-1:30pm with Nancy Gianni, GiGi's mom, and Academic Director, Courtney Phillips. Everyone welcome! Share your vision and ideas for YOUR future Playhouse while the kids

eat and have fun! Come with your kids or by yourself for a much needed cup of coffee!

If you are interested in helping with the new Chicago Playhouse, contact Nancy Gianni at ngianni@gigisplayhouse.org or 847-571-7676.



New Location for Summer Outreach for the Chicago Playhouse!

Our new summer location is 1 mile west of the other Playhouse, directly across from Independence Park!
Tapestry Building
3824 W. Irving Park Rd.
Chicago IL

Join us on Wednesdays between 11am-1:30pm for an Open Play Lunch with Nancy Gianni, GiGi's mom and Courtney Phillips, academic director!

A Second 'Home' for New Families

When Magaly Paredes welcomed her son, Max, into the world, she was unexpectedly introduced to Down syndrome. "We had no prior warning, and it was quite a surprise for us." Paredes said "But we just see Max and he is beautiful!" Paredes says she is thankful for a supportive family, getting connected to GiGi's Playhouse and meeting other families who have this aspect to life in common at our Family Night event.

"Whenever a new family contacts us, the first thing we talk about after we share a heartfelt 'Congratulations!' is about the best place to get started with our organization. Family night provides the opportunity to connect with other parents, siblings, children and to simply celebrate the joy of being touched by Down syndrome." says Site Coordinator Annie Sloka.



For more information on our Family Night and other programs, see our website at www.gigisplayhouse.org and click on the Fox Valley link to see our calendar of events.

GiGi's Playhouse Welcomes Our Newest Program Volunteer, Kim Korkowski

Kim Korkowski is a psychology major at DePaul University and a friend of Charlie Dickerson, one of our favorite Special Olympic Young Athletes. Because Kim felt drawn by the warmth and love of children with Down syndrome, she will be selecting a monthly program to run at GiGi's Fox Valley. She says "I'm really looking forward to starting my own group at GiGi's. These children have taught me so much already and I am so excited to be working with them!" Thank you Kim!!!



at the Tamarack Golf Club in Naperville. This is a phenomenal event benefiting the lives of children with Down syndrome and their families in the Fox Valley region and beyond!

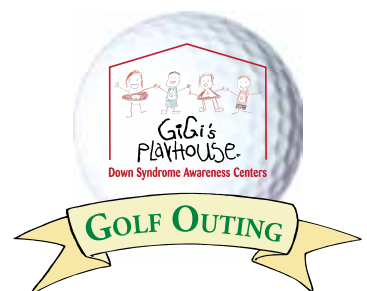
Proceeds from this year's golf outing will benefit our Fox Valley location's FREE literacy and educational programs which provide private and group tutoring to children with Down syndrome at no cost to our families.

This fun filled day of golf offers tremendous fun for all who contribute and sponsor the day's activities. We are not soliciting you for funds, however, we need your help and support to make this event a success. From volunteers to help the day of the event, to networking to find potential sponsors, we need your help to spread the word!

For more information on how you can support this event, contact Fox Valley at 630-778-PLAY or foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org

GiGi's Playhouse 5th Annual Golf Outing

We invite you to be a part of GiGi's Playhouse 5th Annual Golf Outing on July 22nd



Programs & Activities

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 focuses 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.

Chicago Calendar

NEW ADDRESS FOR SUMMER!

**Directly across from
Independence Park!
Tapestry Building
3824 W. Irving Park Rd
Chicago, IL**

2 Open Play Lunch, 11am–1:30pm

5 Open Play-Hispanic Group, 9–11am

9 Open Play Lunch, 11am–1:30pm

13 5K Run/Walk

15 Literacy Program, 1-6pm

16 Open Play Lunch, 11am–1:30pm

17 Literacy Program, 5-6pm

18 Literacy Program, 10am-1pm

19 Open Play, 9–11am
Kids Club, 4–5:30pm

23 Open Play Lunch, 11am–1:30pm

26 Crawlers, 9:00–9:45am
2 & Under 10–11:30am

29 Literacy Program, 1-6pm

Check Website for updated program times or
call Courtney at 847-769-8795

Hoffman Estates Calendar

**Open Hours – Monday- Thursday
8:30am-4:30pm**

2 Special Intentions, 7pm

3 Open Play Lunch, 12:30–2pm

4 Family Night, 6:30–8:30pm

7 Meeting, 7pm

10 Wendy's Night – corner of Golf &
Roselle Rd, 4–8pm
Open Play Lunch, 12:30–2pm

12 Crawlers, 9–9:45am
2 & Under, 10–11:30am
Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12:30–1:30pm
Playhouse Pals, 2–3:30pm

13 5K Run/Walk

17 Open Play Lunch, 12:30–2pm

20 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup,
11am–1pm

21 Meeting, 7pm

24 Wendy's Night – corner of Golf &
Roselle Rd, 4–8pm
Open Play Lunch, 12:30–2pm

25 Friday Friends, 7pm

26 Kids Club, 10–11:30am

27 Polish Group, 11am–1pm, RSVP to
Krystyna at 847.962.4820

28 Meeting, 7pm

Literacy Daily as scheduled

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	JUNE		

McHenry Calendar

Open Hours – Monday- Friday 8am-1pm

- 1 Open Play, 10am–12pm ~ come join us for Pizza & Friendship
- 2 Show Me A Sign, 6pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome)
- 6 Hawgs & Hot Rods event, join us Woodstock Harley-Davidson
GiGi's Cheer, 4:15pm at Layton Athletics
- 8 Open Play, 10am–12pm ~ come join us for Pizza & Friendship
Wendy's Night-McHenry, 5–8pm
- 9 Evening Open Play, 5–7pm come for fun & friendship
- 10 Options & advocacy, 10am
Art Class, 4pm
- 11 Teen Tastics, 7pm games & snacks
- 12 Crawlers, 10:15am join our Occupational Therapist for movement
- 13 5K run/walk
GiGi's Cheer, 4:15pm at Layton Athletics
- 15 Open Play, 10am–12pm ~ come join us for Pizza & Friendship
- 16 Show Me A Sign, 6pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome)
- 18 Kids Club, 6:30pm
- 19 F.I.N.D.S. Open Play, 2–4pm, All ages. Bring a friend to play!
- 20 GiGi's Cheer, 4:15pm at Layton Athletics
- 21 Wendy's Night- Crystal Lake, 5–8pm
- 22 Polish reading group "Czytamy Po Polsku", 4–6pm must RSVP (847)978-0601 or (815)385-7529 (Must read at a 1st grade level)
Open Play, 10am–12pm ~ come join us for Pizza & Friendship
- 23 Evening Open Play, 5-7pm come for fun & friendship
- 24 Art Class, 4pm
- 25 Friday Friends, 7pm Disco Party at the playhouse!
- 27 Daddy & Me, 10am–12pm
GiGi's Cheer, 4:15pm at Layton Athletics
- 30 Bookmaking, 6:30pm
Show Me A Sign, 6pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome)
- 29 Open Play, 10am–12pm ~ come join us for Pizza & Friendship

Fox Valley Calendar

- 1 Literacy Program, 5–5:30pm
 - 2 Literacy Program, 4:30–6pm
 - 3 Literacy Program, 4–5pm
 - 4 Teen-Tastic, 7–9pm, RSVP 630.778.PLAY
 - 5 Literacy Program, 9–10:30am
2 & under, 9:30–11am
 - 7 Literacy Program, 12:30–1:30pm, 4–5:15pm
Tot Class, 9:30-11:00am, RSVP 630.778.PLAY
 - 8 Literacy Program, 5–5:30pm
 - 9 Literacy Program, 4:30–6pm
 - 10 Literacy Program, 4–5pm
Wendy's Fundraiser, 5–8pm
 - 12 Literacy Program, 9–10:30am
Daddy & Me, 3–4:30 pm
Walkers Group, 9:30–10:30am
 - 13 5K Run/Walk
 - 14 Literacy Program, 12:30–1:30pm, 4–5:15pm
Tot Class, 9:30-11:00am, RSVP 630.778.PLAY
 - 15 Literacy Program, 5–5:30pm
 - 16 Literacy Program, 4:30–6pm
Karate Kickers, Ages 8–12: 5:15pm–5:45pm, 13 and up: 6pm–6:30pm
RSVP 815.436.3817
 - 17 Literacy Program, 4–5pm
 - 19 Literacy Program, 9–10:30am
Hop, Skip & Jumpers, 10:30am–12pm, RSVP 630.335.4824
Playhouse Pals, 2–4pm
 - 21 Literacy Program, 12:30–1:30pm, 4–5:15pm
Tot Class, 9:30–11:00am, RSVP 630.778.PLAY
 - 22 Literacy Program, 5–5:30pm
 - 23 Literacy Program, 4:30–6pm
 - 24 Literacy Program, 4–5pm
 - 25 GiGi's Family Night, 6–8pm, RSVP 630.844.1720
 - 26 Literacy Program, 9–10:30am
 - 27 Nuestros Angeles, 11am–1pm
 - 28 Literacy Program, 12:30–1:30pm, 4–5:15pm
Tot Class, 9:30-11:00am, RSVP 630.778.PLAY
 - 29 Literacy Program, 5–5:30pm
 - 30 Literacy Program, 4:30–6pm
- Special Olympics Young Athletes (will be cancelled for June & July)
 - Crawlers Group, Playhouse Pals (cancelled through the summer)

Sioux City Calendar

- 2 Group Literacy, 9:30–10:15am
- 5 Signing Times, 10am
Open Play, 10:30–Noon
Teen Tastic, 12–1:30pm
- 9 Group Literacy, 5:45–6:30pm
- 10 Literacy, 9–10am
ART Class, 4:30–6:00pm
Literacy, 5:30–6:30pm
- 11 Literacy, 9–10am
Family Fun Night Open Play w/ PIZZA, 6pm
- 12 Literacy, 9:30–10:30am
Hop, Skip & Jumpers, 10:30–11:30am
- 13 2 and Under Group, 2–3:30pm
- 14 Open Play, 10–11:30am
- 16 Group Literacy, 9:30–10:15am
- 17 Literacy, 8:30–9:30am
Camp Literacy, 9:30–11:30am
Literacy, 5:30–6:30pm
- 18 Literacy, 9–10am
- 19 Literacy, 9:30–10:30am
Chili's Fundraiser lunch, dinner & snack
- 22 Open Play, 10–11:30am
- 23 Group Literacy, 5:45–6:30pm
- 24 Literacy, 9–10am
Literacy, 5:30–6:30pm
- 25 Literacy, 9–10am
- 26 Literacy, 9:30–10:30am
Nuestros Angeles, 10:30am–12pm
- 28 Motivational Monday Walk Meeting
www.events.org/gigiwalksc
- 30 Group Literacy, 9:30–10:15am

Des Moines Calendar

- 3 Open Play, 10–11:30am
- 8 Open Play w/pizza, 5:30–7pm
- 11 Friday Friends Bingo Night!!, 7–9pm
- 12 Music Around the World with Miss Ann, 11am–12pm
- 17 Open Play, 10–11:30am
- 18 Mom's Night Out, 7pm
- 19 Craft & Story Time with Miss Joe, 11am
- 22 Open Play w/pizza, 5:30–7pm
- 25 Open Play w/pizza, 11:30am–1pm

GiGi's Playhouse
1069 W. Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

nonprofit organization

u.s. postage

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permit no. 93



Fox Valley Annual Golf Outing:

July 22, 2010
Tamarack Golf Club in
Naperville

Cubs Cares!

The Chicago Playhouse partners with Cubs Cares and the McCormick Foundation to provide free programming to all individuals with Down syndrome in the Chicagoland area! Cubs Chairman, Tom Ricketts, Cubs outfielder Tyler Colvin and play-by-play announcer Len Kasper, presented GiGi's with a \$10,000 check for the Chicago Playhouse! We are so grateful to be recognized by incredible organizations such as the Cubs and their affiliates. Our promise to the Cubs is that we will make them proud by using the granted funds for spreading awareness, piloting a math program, and continuing to keep all our services free!!



GiGi's Playhouse
Down Syndrome Awareness
5K Fun Run and Walk
Sunday, June 13, 2010

Hawgs and Hot Rods Krusin' for the kids

June 6th
Woodstock
Harley Davidson!

Please register
on-line at
www.gigisplayhouse.org



Crystal Lake parade

July 5th & McHenry parade
July 18th, call (815)385-7529 to participate

Save the Date

June 6

Hawgs and Hotrods - Woodstock Harley Davidson — McHenry

June 13

5K — 8:45am



June 22

Agio Italian Bistro Golf Outing — Palatine Hills Golf Course. Call 847-991-2150 to reserve your spot!

July 22

Fox Valley Annual Golf Outing, Tamarack Golf Club in Naperville

July 24

Chicago Disability Pride Parade— Chicago

July 30

Wine Styles Fundraiser — Sioux City, 5-8pm

August 28

Walk for Down syndrome Awareness, 9am-Noon — Sioux City, Chris Larsen Shelter

Sept 18

Annual Bike Ride—Fox Valley