



GiGi's  
PLAYHOUSE™

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

March 2010

# Newsletter

## Locations

### 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)

[www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)  
[info@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:info@gigisplayhouse.org)



## The 4th Annual Spread the Love Gala was a Night to Remember!

CBS 2 anchor, Rob Johnson, hosted our Gala once again and he wowed us with his views and commentary on the r-word! Having a brother with Down syndrome himself, he is an incredibly strong advocate and was able to use his platform as a news anchor to spread awareness about the negative effect of the use of the r-word. Be sure to check out our website to see his commentary!

We had Doctors, politicians, professionals, family members, and even some adults with Down syndrome that helped to keep the party in motion all night. Our newest board member with Down syndrome, Brenna Lindquist from the McHenry location, thanked everyone for coming and then the dance floor was rockin' non stop all night!!

In the midst of all the dancing and fun, there was a young couple quietly observing the entire scene from their table. Both of them had expressions full of emotion – an emotion that many parents in the crowd recognized.



As it turned out, they were expecting their 1st child in 4 months and had recently

received the diagnosis of Down syndrome! They heard about GiGi's and bought their ticket to the Gala to learn more – what a brave

and wonderful thing for new parents to venture out to! It's so clear that they are already great advocates for their baby! What an amazing life that child is going to have. Here is what they had to say about the experience:

"Thank you for introducing Nick and I to so many great families last night. We had a fantastic time! Of course everyone knew exactly what to say and we left the event even more ready for any challenges ahead. We're looking forward to getting involved and to getting to know everyone better. Thank you for creating such a special organization!"

A big thank you to Lora Bak and her Gala team for hosting this incredible event.



*Rob Johnson with our newest BOD member!*



## A Picture is Worth a Million Words

With so much focus on the r-word and negative impact it can have, GiGi's has taken the approach of spreading awareness without even using words! The Traveling Gallery has the capability of spreading awareness simply through the use of photos. This national awareness piece made an appearance at the Gala and inspired all who saw it. It was clear that people were drawn to these larger than life portraits. Slowly, each person in the crowd made their way over to the Gallery and was mesmerized by its' impact – a loud, yet wordless, impact. It's title, I have a voice, is clearly portrayed; each voice is heard through the eyes of the faces displayed. With a coffee table book in the works, we are seeking even more places to display this Gallery and share its impact! For more information about hosting the Gallery or if you are interested in helping with the production of the upcoming book contact [ihaveavoice@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:ihaveavoice@gigisplayhouse.org).

## New Learning Center and Teen/Adult Center at Hoffman!

Club GiGi's has something for everyone!! The Hoffman Estates location expanded their location to include 2 new literacy rooms, administrative offices and a teen/Adult center called Club GiGi's! They had a ribbon cutting with the mayor and then the disco ball was set in motion and the party began! They definitely took ownership of their new space and so did the kids did with the new literacy rooms!



## Back by popular demand Speech and Communication Seminar!

Birth – 5 year olds  
Tuesday, April 6, 2010 • Hoffman Estates Playhouse

Lora White, SLP and Playhouse advocate, will host a seminar to provide parents with basic information in regards to their young child's oral motor/feeding and communication/speech development issues.

Topics covered include...

- Your child's oral motor and feeding issues
- Communication and speech development
- Ensuring your child is receiving the proper therapy

RSVP to [rsvp@gigisplayhouse.com](mailto:rsvp@gigisplayhouse.com)

## 2010 Video Unveiled!

Each year, GiGi's Playhouse creates a video based on the inspiration we see daily at each Playhouse. Last year, our video featured siblings of kids with Down syndrome. We heard, in their words, the blessings and challenges of having a brother or sister with Down syndrome. This year's video was inspired by the families we serve and an appreciation for the journey that each of them takes from the moment they receive the diagnosis of Down syndrome for their child to the realization that their child is full of abilities and potential. The video follows the path of 2 families as they experience how the programs at GiGi's has helped their child reach goals and dispel stereotypes every step of the way. Together, GiGi's, these 2 families, and all other Playhouse families, continue to raise the standard by which individual with Down syndrome are measured and this video is a testament to that fact. To view this and past videos, visit [www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org). To request a copy of any video, contact your local Playhouse.



## Teaching Awareness

The Sioux City Playhouse was the site of Alpha Delta Kappa's, a teachers sorority, November meeting. Through conversations and a presentation, this group of 25 educators was shown the great things that are happening at our Playhouse and the vast potential of individuals with Down syndrome. These future educators are the ones that will have children with Down syndrome and other special needs in their classes in the near future. It is so important they see past the diagnosis and into the true ability of each child. We are thrilled to offer the Playhouse as a place for educators, therapists and other professionals to hold their meetings as we know that just by entering the Playhouse doors, we are able to spread awareness!

## 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.

## 1 YEAR looking back... WOW what a huge ACCOMPLISHMENT!

We are so proud of everyone who made this 1st Anniversary possible; Nancy & Paul Gianni along with their 4 kids, GiGi's Playhouse Board Members from across the nation & locally, and all the wonderful support from generous families, groups & businesses for donations of goods, services and monetary needs. Thanks to all the wonderful children & adults who are making this a reality for us to provide such a great resource of Down syndrome awareness in the Siouxland Community! Together we have created a learning environment to teach reading, phonics and math along with social peer interaction, fun days & nights filled with activities for people



of all ages - all the time furthering awareness of Down syndrome by helping children and adults reach their potential!

**Anniversary Celebration** Join us on Saturday, March 20 for our 1 year Anniversary Celebration Open House!

**Leaps & Bounds** is underway learning lots of new dances for the upcoming Contemporary Dance Studios recital which will be held on May 22 in Sioux City!

**Teen Tastic Bowls....** Our Teen-Tastics group took over Lewis Bowl North for a FUN and EXCITING time of bowling & friendship! Many awards were given for Most Strikes, Best Gutter ball and Best Glowing Shoes! Join us in March for another FABULOUS TEEN TASTIC EVENT on Saturday March 6!

**Monthly Raffle** Each time you attend an event at GiGi's Playhouse in the month of March you will be entered to win a prize!

**Motivational Mondays** Is there a particular topic you would like to learn more about? If so, contact us today for information about Motivational Monday!

Motivational Monday, Mon, April 26 @ 6pm, Northwest Area Education Agency

**First Friday OPEN PLAY** Join us on the first Friday of each month from 6-7:30pm for video games, board games, friendship & awareness! Bring your family & friends for FUN!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	3 Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	4 Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	5 OPEN PLAY Family Friday 6:00-7:30p with PIZZA	6 Literacy 9:00a-10:30a Teen Tastic 11:00a-1:00p
7	8	9 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	10 Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	11 Literacy 4:30p-5:00p Open Play 5:00-6:30p	12	13 Literacy 9:00-10:30a Hop, Skip & Jumpers 10:30a-11:30a
14 Daylight Savings Time	15 Open Play 9:00-10:30a	16 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	17 St Patrick's Day Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	18 Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	19	20 Literacy 9-10am OPEN HOUSE 1 year Anniversary Celebration 10a- Noon
21	22 Motivational Monday 6:00p	23 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p Open Play 6:00p-7:30p	24 Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	25 Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	26	27 Literacy 9:00a-10:30a Open Play 11:00-12:30a
28 Palm Sunday	29	30 Literacy 4:30-6:00p	31 Literacy 4:00-5:30p			



## Dining with GiGi's

GiGi's Fox Valley is looking for families to "host a dinner with their friends" as part of a fund-raising event. If you have been looking for a simple way to help us raise money and spread the word about GiGi's, this is it! The event will be held in late April. Anyone interested in learning more about helping with this event or hosting a dinner party at their home to benefit GiGi's Fox Valley should contact Sue Cicero at 630.836.1892. A meeting for the host families will be held at the Playhouse on March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7pm.



In January we had a great turnout for **Playhouse Pals** and we had fun making glittery snow flakes. Playhouse Pals meets the 3rd Saturday of every month from 2-4pm. Come join the fun - We'd love to see you there!



## Karate Kickers Builds Confidence and Self Esteem!!

*"I was pleasantly surprised at how gentle and controlled the movements were when my son participated in the Karate activities. He is so proud of what he can do, it has really helped him feel more confident!"*



Sensei David Smith, the instructor of our Karate Kickers program says "Often times, I find that people have a preconception about the term 'Karate' and they are surprised to learn that the class is entirely different than what they anticipated." Smith says that there is **no contact** and the main focus is to build self esteem, coordination and strength while learning basic self defense skills. Likewise, the 30-45 minute program promotes coordination, strength and endurance while working to Increase balance. Sensei Smith has been involved in martial arts for 18 years studying traditional karate styles, Shorei Rye & Goju Rye. Sensei Smith has instructed students for the past 14 years and has competed in national & international tournaments.

The next Karate Kickers group will be held on Wednesday evening beginning at 515pm March 17 at the Fox Valley Playhouse. The participants ages are 8 and up. For more information or to RSVP to 815.436.3817.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> Literacy 12:30p-1:30p 4:00p-5:15p	<b>2</b> Literacy 5:00p-5:30p	<b>3</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>4</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:00p	<b>5</b> Teen-Tastic 7:00p-9:00p RSVP 630.778.PLAY	<b>6</b> 2 & under 9:30a-11:00a Literacy 9:00a-10:30a
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30p-1:30p 4:00p-5:15p	<b>9</b> Special Olympics Young Athletes 5:45-6:30p 6:30-7:15p Literacy 5:00p-5:30p	<b>10</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>11</b> Wendy's Fundraiser 5:00-8:00p Literacy 4:00p-5:00p	<b>12</b> GiGi's Family Night 6:00-8:00p RSVP 630.778.PLAY	<b>13</b> Walkers Group 9:30a-10:30a Crawlers Group 10:30a-11:30a Daddy & Me 3:00p-4:30 p Literacy 9:00a-10:30a
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30p-1:30p 4:00p-5:15p	<b>16</b> Literacy 5:00p-5:30p	<b>17</b> Karate Kickers Ages 8-12, 5:15p-5:45p 13+, 6:00p-6:30p RSVP 815.436.3817 Literacy 4:30p-6p	<b>18</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:00p	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Hop, Skip & Jumpers 10:30a-12p RSVP 630.335.4824 Playhouse Pals 2:00-4:00p Literacy 9:00a-10:30a
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30p-1:30p 4:00p-5:15p	<b>23</b> Literacy 5:00p-5:30p	<b>24</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>25</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:00p	<b>26</b> GiGi's Family Night 6:00-8:00p RSVP 630.844.1720	<b>27</b> Literacy 9:00a-10:30a
<b>28</b> Nuestros Angeles 11:00a-1:00p	<b>29</b> Literacy 12:30p-1:30p 4:00p-5:15p	<b>30</b> Literacy 5:00p-5:30p	<b>31</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p			

## Thank You, Castle Builders and Bataille Academie!

What an amazing open house! Castle Builders invited hundreds of people to an Open House at a beautiful custom home. Posters and displays about Down syndrome, GiGi's Playhouse and our kids were placed throughout the home, and many people stopped to learn more about the Playhouse and our programs. The Bataille Academie put on a beautiful dance performance, and donations were provided to help support the programs of the Playhouse. Our kids had a blast practicing dance moves with the performers! Thank you so much!



boarding and some karaoke were enjoyed by all. Schaumburg High School football players joined in on the fun, Sarah got up on stage to lead karaoke!



Discussing transitions, IEP's, early intervention and strategies for an effective education for their children.

Join us on March 14th from 11am-1pm to get to know other Playhouse families!



## Polish Group

Join us on March 24 from 11-1p! RSVP to Krystyna at 847.962.4820.

## Hispanic Playgroup

Sarah Hogan, a school social worker and a parent of a child with Down syndrome, and Melissa Millett, a bilingual social worker, were guests at our group. They discussed both the Early Intervention process and IEP process, and talked about the best ways a parent can advocate for their child and partner with service providers. Parents were able to exchange ideas with others as well as get a better understanding of the overall process. Parents said that thanks to Sarah and Melissa, they had a great meeting dis-

## Art Supplies!

The Playhouse received an amazing donation of art supplies for kids of all ages! Di- Anne and Brett are excited to try them out!



## Kids Club – Our Favorite Things!

Great acts showed up for our Talent Show! Singing, a puppet show, dancing, key-

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> Literacy 5:15p-6:00p Meeting 7p	<b>2</b> Literacy 9a-2:30p, 4:30p-6:30p	<b>3</b> Literacy 3:15p-4:45p, 6:30p-7:15p Special Intentions 7:00-9:00p	<b>4</b> Literacy 9:30a-2:30p, 4:30p-6:15p Open Play 12:30-2:00p	<b>5</b> Literacy 3:30-6:45p Family Night 6:30-8:30p	<b>6</b> Literacy 8:45-10:15a
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Literacy 9:00-10:30a, 1:00-2:30p	<b>10</b> Literacy 9-9:45a, 3:15-4:45p, 6:30-7:15p	<b>11</b> Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 9:30-2:30, 7-7:45p	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Crawlers 9:00a-9:45a 2 & Under 10:00a-11:30a Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12:00p-1:30p Playhouse Pals 2:00p-3:30p
<b>14</b> Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11:00a-1:00p Literacy 5:15p-6:00p	<b>15</b> Literacy 5:15p-6:00p	<b>16</b> Literacy 9a- 2:30p, 4:30-6:30p	<b>17</b> Literacy 3:15-4:45p, 6:30-7:15p	<b>18</b> Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 4:30-6:15p	<b>19</b> Literacy 3:30-6:45p	<b>20</b> Literacy 8:45-10:15a
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Meeting 7p	<b>23</b> Literacy 9-10:30a, 1-2:30p	<b>24</b> Literacy 9-9:45a, 3:15-4:45p, 6:30-7:15p	<b>25</b> Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 7:00p-7:45p	<b>26</b> Friday Friends 7p-Laser Quest! 860 N Roselle Road in Hoffman Estates	<b>27</b> Kids Club 10:00a-11:30a
<b>28</b> Polish Group 11:00a-1:00p RSVP to Krystyna at 847.962.4820	<b>29</b> Literacy 5:15-6p	<b>30</b> Literacy 9a-2:30p, 4:30-6:30p	<b>31</b> Literacy 3:15-4:45p, 6:30-7:15p			

## Welcome Back!

The Jarvis family was originally from this area and they attended events at the GiGi's Playhouse in Hoffman Estates. They are currently living in California, but came back to Illinois for a visit with their twin sons, Jon and Matthew. They called and asked to use the McHenry Playhouse for a gathering place for family and friends while they were in town. Wendy (Mom) said, "This will be the first time my friends will experience the "magic" that happens at GiGi's. It was nice to hear/see my friends "light bulb moment" when they entered the Playhouse. I've talked about this place with them for years...but I guess they needed to see it to understand the magic!" Wendy went on to say that a great time was had by all and that they can't wait to visit us at our new location. Thank you Jarvis family for spreading awareness!



**CPR Class**  
 March 10th- 6pm at the Johnsburg Fire Station, the cost is \$15.00 per person (normally \$35.00) space is limited so please call Jean at the Playhouse to reserve your spot.

## We are moving!

Just a reminder that we will be in our new location 5404 W. Elm St. Suite A as of March 1st come check it out!

## Newest Member!

We welcome our newest little member to the McHenry Playhouse, twelve week old Eli Horton! Erin and Josh Horton were notified by their adoption agency about Eli's birth, much to Erin's surprise, within weeks they brought him home to meet his big brother 18 month old Malachi. Overall, he is a very strong and healthy child, but he will need open heart surgery to repair AV Canal defect once he has gained enough weight. He is a beautiful boy with a very sweet disposition and when you look into his big brown eyes all you see is love. Welcome Eli!!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	3	4 Art Class 4:00p	5 Signing til Dawn Baby Signs 10:00a	6
7 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics Nuestros Angles 10a-12p	8	9 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Wendy's Night 5:00p-8:00p	10 CPR Class 6p at the Johnsburg Fire Station	11 Options & Advocacy 10:00a	12 Signing til Dawn Baby Signs 10:00a Teen Tastics 7:00 p	13 Crawlers 10:15a-11:00a
14 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	15	16 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	17	18 Art Class 4:00p Potty Training Class 7:00p	19 Signing til Dawn Baby Signs 10:00a Kids Club 6:30p	20 Themed Open Play St. Patrick's Day Party 11:15a
21 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	22	23 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	24	25	26 Signing til Dawn Baby Signs 10:00a Friday Friends 7:00p	27
28 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics Daddy & Me 9a	29	30 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	31			



## A Place to Grow

Serving on the board of GiGi's Playhouse is more than meeting and planning; it's a way to make a difference for people with Down syndrome in Chicago.

"My best friend's daughter (Isabelle) has Down syndrome, and they live in Washington, D.C.," says Anshu Choudhri, a founding member of Chicago's board. "While I may not be able to spend time with Isabelle very often, knowing that I can make a difference in the lives of children just like her brings me closer to her. All it takes is two minutes with the kids that come through our doors and it reminds me every time of why this is a great organization."

Though you may only participate in one or two of the many programs at GiGi's Playhouse, its mission remains the same, giving all people with Down syndrome and their families a place to learn, socialize and raise awareness. That pre-crawler you have now will be a Playhouse Pal before you know it. And GiGi's will have a place for him or her.

Want to help us shape the future of GiGi's Chicago? The Chicago Playhouse board has several vacancies, for anyone interested in helping create the Playhouse's future. The Chicago Board plans major events, fundraisers, programs and other activities throughout the year. Help us create events such as the Taste of GiGi's Playhouse, Motivational Mondays, our playgroups and educational programs.

Help us make GiGi's Chicago the best it can be. Interested?  
E-mail: [Chicago@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:Chicago@gigisplayhouse.org).

**Chicago's Third Annual Game Night** is coming on March 27. Join us for a night of food, fun and awareness. Our kids love playing games at GiGi's, why shouldn't we? The fun starts at 7 pm



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	3 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	4 Open Play 11:30a-1:00p	5	6 Open Play 9:00a-11:00a Hispanic Group 9:00a- 11:00a
7	8	9 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	10 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	11	12	13 Playhouse Pals 11:15a-12:45p
14	15	16 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	17 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	18 Open Play 11:30a-1:00p	19	20 Open Play and Kids Club cancelled
21	22	23 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	24 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	25	26 Movie Night 7:00p	27 Crawlers: 9:00a-9:45a 2 and Under 10:00a-11:30a Hop Skip and Jumpers 12:00p-1:30p Game Night 7:00p
28	29	30 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	31 Literacy 4:00-5:00p			





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## St. Patricks Day Parade!

Join us March 13th for the St. Patty's Day parade in Chicago! GiGi's Playhouse will be part of the festivities and needs YOU to help us represent! RSVP to [rspv@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:rspv@gigisplayhouse.org) with the number of family member attending! Strollers, dogs, wagons, walkers...all are welcome!! Details will be posted on our website soon – mark your calendars!

## 5K!

Interested in joining the 5K committee? Contact [info@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:info@gigisplayhouse.org) or your local Playhouse today!



## Save the Date



### March 18

Potty Training Class — McHenry, 7 pm, certified nurse from Sedom will be conducting the training. Please RSVP to the Playhouse (815) 385-7529

### April 3

Breakfast with the Easter Bunny — Hoffman Playhouse, 10-11:30 am

### April 6

Speech and Communication Seminar — Hoffman Playhouse 7-9 pm

### April 24

Re-Grand Opening & Volunteer Appreciation Party — McHenry

### March 27

3rd Annual Game Night — Chicago, 7 pm

### May 7

Family Night – Hoffman Playhouse, 6:30-8:30 pm  
Meet Brandy and Val, Therapy dogs, hear a story, eat pizza and have fun!