



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

February 2010

# Newsletter

## Locations

### Hoffman Estates Location

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

### Fox Valley Location

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

### McHenry Location

1720 N. Richmond Rd.  
McHenry, IL 60050  
815.385.PLAY (7529)

### Chicago Location

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

### Sioux City Location

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

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

## Preschool Prep



**"We're ready for preschool!" said Kristin.** "Before we began Tot Class, I couldn't imagine Isabel being ready for preschool, but now I believe she is and that she will do well."

Another parent, Sue, said, "Dominic and I loved our Tot Class experience. The

social interaction that the kids experience and the parent involvement is invaluable as a preparation for pre-school. Because of the Tot Class, Dominic knew about taking turns and had to cope with participating in non-preferred activities. I would recommend the Tot Class to any parent who wanted a social environment while incorporating and practicing the therapeutic skills their at-home therapists have taught them."

The Tot Class currently meets every Monday from 9:30-11:00 a.m. Participation is limited to 5 participants and parents or caregivers take hands-on, active roles in the group. For more information, contact Annie at [foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org) or call 630-778-PLAY (7529)

## 6<sup>th</sup> Playhouse Opening on Down Syndrome Awareness Day!

For our 2nd year in a row, we are opening a Playhouse on March 21st, Down Syndrome Awareness Day!! When Meghan



heard that there was a GiGi's Playhouse in Sioux City, IA, she immediately went there to check it out and thought, "We have to bring this to Des Moines!" Now, 1 year after the Sioux City opening, Megan and her team have done just that! We are thrilled to announce the opening of our 6th location in DES MOINES, IOWA! Their group of volunteers, Board members and families have worked very hard to get the word out, raise funds, and find a perfect Playhouse for their community. They already have a large following of families that can't wait to get into the Playhouse doors, be part of the educational programs and have their own place in the community to gather! Interested in helping with this new location? Email [desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org) for more info!!

## Learning and Loving Literacy in Sioux City

As we move into the 3rd session of Literacy in Sioux City, I have very much enjoyed being the Literacy Coordinator. I have been inspired that so many have been touched by this program! Here is feedback from some of the parents whose children have been in the program:

### Zachary

In just 5 months, Zachary went from recognizing 17 words to more than 60 as well as reading words in context. He and I enjoyed the process as it provided us insight on new ways to help him learn. His tutor was wonderful, going above and beyond to help him gain success in his reading! We drive an hour every Saturday and are so thrilled at the opportunity to be involved in this program! We feel blessed to be a part of GiGi's Playhouse in Sioux City!

### Abigail

Abigail has made wonderful progress and has responded so well to her tutor. We are excited for her to continue to grow in her learning through this program!

### Devon

Devon has made great strides, as he uses his sign to tell lots of stories as he adds more words to his vocabulary.

### Kohen

Kohen is matching all family members, colors and is beginning to match words. He gets excited when we walk through the door of the Playhouse. His tutor is very patient and gears her teaching to his interests. We look forward to the next session of tutoring at GiGi's Playhouse!



### Olivia

Olivia is able to take her words and match them in her Literacy Books and her other reading materials. She is soaking in the material given, is always eager to try new things and excited to share her words with her friends.



Remember it is never too late to start...If you would like to have your child tutored in this program or would like to be a Literacy Tutor yourself...call us at 712-226-PLAY or email us at [siouxcity@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:siouxcity@gigisplayhouse.org). If you would like to enroll your child in the Literacy program or if you would like to be trained to be a tutor in the program, contact Jenni Koch or your local Playhouse!

## Inspiration From My Brother Clifford

My brother was born with Down syndrome in the 1950's, and the doctors told my mom to lock him up. She said that she would never do that to her son, and Clifford was treated like any other child in our family. He was able to go to a private school started by a group of parents. Clifford was very high functioning, but people did not realize how capable he was. He didn't have the opportunities to interact with others like children do today.



I am happiest when I am around children. I am a former Special Ed teacher, I love children, and I love to volunteer. I have a special place in my heart for children who need help. I knew how capable Clifford was. As a tutor in the Literacy program, I now have the opportunity to work with children who are young and learning and growing—it does more for me than it does for them to watch them learn! The Playhouse is a very happy place—I love to see the interaction between the children, they treat their sibling with Down syndrome like just another brother or sister—which is how it should be! One of my students, Kate, is doing an amazing job in the Literacy program! Kate is 2 ½ years old, and is making such progress! Her attention span, the way she reads the words, her eye hand coordination and finger dexterity, all of these things are growing so much!

## 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.



## Hop, Skip & Jumpers

Looking for some new winter activities? Bring a friend and check out Hop, Skip & Jumpers! Miranda has this group reading, moving & shaking with lots of activities involving Valentine's Day.



## Play, Play And More Play!

We purchased lots of new exercise equipment, riding toys and other useful play resources which were recommended by our local physical therapist and volunteer, Karen Mohring. Come join us for Open Play, new friends and fun throughout the month!

## And the Winner is...

Each time you attend an event at the Sioux City Playhouse, we will enter you into a monthly raffle. February Raffle prize is a GiGi's Playhouse T-shirt!

## Leaps & Bounds Registration

Register now for Leaps & Bounds-Sioux City! Contemporary Dance Studio will be teaching us some new moves with a spectacular recital on May 22! Email [siouxcity@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:siouxcity@gigisplayhouse.org) today!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> Open Play 5:00p-6:00p	<b>2</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>3</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	<b>4</b> Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Literacy 9:00a-10:30a
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>10</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	<b>11</b> Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Hop, Skip & Jumpers 10:30a-11:30a
<b>14</b> Valentine's Day 	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>17</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	<b>18</b> Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Teen Tastic 11:00a-1:00p
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Motivational Monday 6:00p	<b>23</b> Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	<b>24</b> Literacy 4:00p-5:30p	<b>25</b> Literacy 4:30p-5:00p	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Literacy 9:00a-10:30a Open Play 10:30a-11:30a
<b>28</b>						



## Thank You, Advisory Board!

Over the years, we have been blessed with a talented, dedicated and hard working Advisory Board.

Doug Collie and Tom Benco have made significant contributions from the onset of this location including efforts with fundraising, the move from Plainfield to the Fox Valley location, and co-founding the Daddy n' Me group. Thank you Doug and Tom for everything you have contributed to make the Fox Valley location a success in our community! Joining our Board in 2010 are Jennine Vlasaty and Dr. Mark Brinkman. Jennine has been a part of the GiGi's Playhouse family since the arrival of her son with Down syndrome and will bring great talent to the team. Mark has an 11-year-old daughter with Down syndrome and he has also been a pediatrician for 17 years in the Naperville/Plainfield area assisting many families who are touched by Down syndrome.



## Meet & Greet

*Author of Gross Motor Skills in Children with Down Syndrome, Patricia Winders, P.T.*  
February 26th, 4:30 - 5:30pm, Fox Valley Playhouse

The author of Gross Motor Skills in Children with Down Syndrome, Patricia Winders, P.T., is looking forward to meeting our kids! Bring your family to meet an author who supports and encourages our kids to reach their highest potential. Let's give her a great GiGi's Playhouse welcome!

## Education Seminar

In January, the Fox Valley Playhouse hosted its second annual "Teaching Modifications for Students with Down Syndrome" presentation. More than 50 educators and parents attended from 10 different school districts. One mom said, "I was so happy that my son's entire school team came in search of ideas on how to improve his learning." A teacher commented, "I was encouraged to see the school professionals and parents working together."

The Playhouse is always looking for ways to reach out to the education community, promote communication between parents and educators and improve the learning conditions for our kids with Down syndrome in the school setting. A special thank you to Sharon Tate, Linda Warning, Jacquie Criger & Suzie Hansen of D204 for sharing their modification ideas for special students.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY 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>	<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-10:00a
<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	<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-10:00a
<b>14</b> Valentine's Day 	<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>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Hop, Skip & Jumpers 10:30a-12p RSVP 630.335.4824 Playhouse Pals 2-4p Literacy 9:00a-10:00a
<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>	<b>26</b> Meet & Greet Author 4:30-5:30p GiGi's Family Night 6-8p RSVP 630.844.1720	<b>27</b> Literacy 9:00a-10:00a
<b>28</b> Nuestros Angeles 11:00a-1:00p						

## 35...and Counting!

Thanks to the addition of a second Literacy room and several new tutors, there are 35 students scheduled so far for the upcoming semester of Literacy at the Hoffman Playhouse! We would love to have a few more tutors so that no students are left on the waiting list, please email literacydirector@gigisplayhouse.org if you want more information.

### Kids Club – Our Favorite Things!

We will talk about our favorite things, so please bring YOUR favorite thing for show and tell!



### Polish Group

Our Polish group meets on the fourth Sunday of each month from 11am—1pm. Join us on February 28! RSVP to Krystyna at 847.962.4820.

### Friday Friends

7pm on Friday, February 26 for Movie Night! Join us!

### Hispanic Playgroup/Nuestros Angeles

Join us on February 14th from 11am-1pm!



### Playhouse Pals and Hop, Skip and Jumpers

The focus is on friendships, sharing and caring – invite friends from school to join you! Spread the Love, spread awareness, and have fun!

### Family Fun Night

Friday, March 5  
6:30-8:30pm  
Don't miss our first Family Fun Night at the Hoffman Playhouse!



## Thank You

### Thank You, Tim Schneider!

Cook County Commissioner Tim Schneider invited Playhouse families to Brookfield Zoo to enjoy the Holiday Magic light display! Families bundled up and enjoyed seeing the animals and beautiful lights together!

### Thank You, Boy Scouts!

Our annual New Years at Noon Party was a huge success, thanks to the Scouts from Troop 399!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Special Intentions 7:00-9:00p	4 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 9:30a-2:30p	5	6 Gala
7	8	9	10	11 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 7:00-7:45p	12	13 Crawlers 9:00a-9:45am 2 & Under 10:00a-11:30a Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12:00p-1:30p Playhouse Pals 2:00p-3:30p
14 Valentine's Day Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11:00a-1:00p Literacy 5:15p-6:00p	15 Literacy 5:15p-6:00p	16 Literacy 9:00a-10:30a	17	18 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 9:30a-2:30p	19	20
21	22	23 Literacy 9:00a-10:30a	24	25 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 7:00p-7:45p	26 Friday Friends 7:00 p	27 Kids Club 10:00a-11:30a
28 Polish Group 11:00a-1:00p RSVP to Krystyna at 847.962.4820						

## We're Moving!

We are very excited to announce that we are moving on March 1! Our new location is approximately 3 miles west on Route 120 in McHenry, and the address is 5404 W. Elm Street, Suite A. The new space has a much needed larger literacy room! There is a beautiful kitchen where we will be able to offer cooking and other life skills programs in the near future!

If you can help with any of our wish list, please contact Jean at the Playhouse (815)385-7529: Large mats, bean-bag chairs, kitchen table & chairs, kitchen accessories, under counter microwave, dishwasher, large area rugs, disco ball, therapy balls, large safety wall mirrors, three bar stools, small drop safe and chalk board paint.

## Bingo Night

McHenry Moose Lodge  
7pm, February 15th

## Art Group

The Playhouse Art Group meets every other Thursday (ages 9 and up). We had a fantastic time making holiday cards for family and friends holiday! Kathy (retired Art teacher) does a wonderful job coming up with creative art projects that are not only fun but utilize many skills. Every project includes the use of fine motor skills, sequencing, and social skills.



## Friday Friends

Friday Friends had a holiday bowling party at Raymond's Bowl in Johnsburg. Everyone had a great time bowling, eating, socializing and dancing in the glow of the neon lights! The joy and happiness was contagious! Friday Friends meets the fourth Friday of every month, come join in the fun!

## Wendy's Night

5-8pm, February 9th

Have dinner with family and friends and help the Playhouse! A percentage of the evening's proceeds go back to the Playhouse, thanks to our friends at Wendy's.

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 4:00 p	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-8:00pm	10	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 Valentine's Day GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	15 McHenry Moose Lodge Bingo Night 7:00 p	16 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	17	18 Art Class 4:00 p	19 Signing til Dawn Baby Signs 10:00a FFF & Kids club Pajama Party 7:00p RSVP	20
21 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics GiGi LXC Cheer Competition	22	23 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	24 Bookmaking 6:30p	25	26 Signing til Dawn Baby Signs 10:00a Friday Friends 7:00p-9:00p	27
28 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics Daddy & Me	29	30 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship	31			

## Holiday Party

Great holiday fun was had at the Chicago Playhouse's First Annual Holiday Party. We had a great turnout! There was fun, food and festivities including holiday movies, games and of course jumping in the inflatable bounce house. The party gave the kids the opportunity to play together and the parents to socialize and network and just enjoy. This was topped off with a visit from the jolly man himself, Santa Claus, who delivered presents to all the children.



## Educator and Therapist Open House February 17 at 7:00PM

Together as a team—parents, educators and therapists—we are the best advocates to surround a child and we can learn from each other! Come to the Chicago Playhouse to learn about some of the ways a child with Down syndrome learns to read and hear about the educational and therapeutic programs we have to offer. We can support your efforts to work with children with Down syndrome. There will be a “make and take” station to help get you started with materials for home, the classroom, and /or therapy sessions



## Just A Reminder On Our Program Changes For 2010...

Don't forget to check your February calendar as some program times have changed from 2009. Saturday Open Plays are now from 9:00am to 11:00am the first and third Saturdays of the month. Hispanic Play

Group/Nuestros Angeles is now the first Saturday of the month at 9:00 am. Please let us know if you have any questions on the new times or suggestions for other programs at [Chicago@GiGisPlayhouse.org](mailto:Chicago@GiGisPlayhouse.org).

## Third Annual Game Night

March 20 at the Chicago Playhouse Come join the fun!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 Open Play 11:30a-1:00p	5	6 Open Play 9:00a-11:00a Hispanic Group 9:00a- 11:00a
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 Playhouse Pals 11:15a-12:45p
14 Valentine's Day 	15	16	17 Educator and Therapist Open House 7:00p	18 Open Play 11:30a-1:00p	19	20 Open Play 9:00a-11:00a Kids Club 4pm-5:30p
21	22 Motivational Monday 7:00p	23	24	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
28	29	30	31			





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GiGi's Playhouse helped me and my family to understand more about Down syndrome. We realized it was not a curse and Brandon is the biggest blessing of our life! I could not image Brandon not having Down syndrome. He is my ray of sunshine each morning. He has taught our family the true meaning of unconditional love; he has taught me to take life as it comes and not to get upset when things don't go my way, but most of all Brandon had taught me to take one day at a time and enjoy to the fullest. We love Brandon!!!!!! To celebrate Brandon, we are forming Team Brandon for the 5K Fun Run and

Walk on Sunday, June 13th. Join our team or form your own!

**2010 5K Fun Run and Walk**

The 2010 5K Fun Run and Walk will be held on Sunday, June 13. Form a team. Volunteer for the day. With the support of sponsors, runners and walkers, the Playhouse is able to raise funds for our educational programs while increasing awareness in our community! We are looking for committee members and co-chairs for the event! Interested? Email [info@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:info@gigisplayhouse.org).

**Thank You, Bataille Dance Academie!**  
The esteemed Bataille Dance Academie offered an amazing opportunity to the Playhouse! The Playhouse kids learned the art of dance while interacting and making friends with other dancers from the academy! Our morning started off with creative movement, stretching and a structured class. What a wonderful way to learn new skills and build self-esteem! Each child from the Playhouse had a buddy from the Dance Academie, and everyone had a wonderful time!



**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Educator and Therapist Open House**  
Feb 17th at the Chicago Playhouse  
**First Anniversary Celebration**  
Sioux City Playhouse • Saturday, March 20, 10a-12p  
**Third Annual Game Night**  
**Chicago Playhouse**  
March 20, 2009 • Come join the fun!  
**Family Fun Night**  
**Friday, March 5 • 6:30-8:30p**  
Don't miss our first Family Fun Night at the Hoffman Playhouse!