



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

September 2011

Newsletter

www.gigisplayhouse.org
info@gigisplayhouse.org

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

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

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

Rockford
8801 N 2nd
Machesney Park, IL 61115
815-654-7529

Chicago
3948 N Lincoln Ave
Chicago, IL 60613
773.583.PLAY (7529)

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

Des Moines
10430 New York Ave Suite A
Urbandale, IA 50322
515.252.PLAY (7529)

Atlanta
549-4 Amsterdam Ave.
Atlanta, GA 30306

Quad Cities
3906 38th Ave
Moline, IL 61265
309-762-PLAY (7529)

Coming soon:
New York, NY

National Awareness!

Next month is Down syndrome awareness month and in preparation of that, GiGi's is sharing some of the tools we use to spread awareness about Down syndrome.



The *i have a voice* Traveling Gallery

Recently my son, Matthew, and I went for a visit to Children's Hope Hospital in Oak Lawn. When we walked in, we saw the beautiful 'i have a voice' Gallery on display and several people were looking at it. Matthew couldn't contain his

excitement in seeing pictures of some of his friends from GiGi's. "HEY! Those are my friends!" he exclaimed to the onlookers. He proceeded to share his enthusiasm, "LOOK! That's Vince, that's my friend, we play together, he is funny and we both like Scooby Doo!" Then he announced with pride that his Mommy works for GiGi's Playhouse and that he LOVES everyone he knows there. When a lady asked him if he knew what Down syndrome was, Matt just said in his most serious voice, "Yes, it means that you have an extra amount of love in your heart!" Atta boy Matt!

-Annie, GiGi's FV Site Coordinator



year old son Aidan, who has Down syndrome, loved seeing the gallery too and had a great time introducing himself and showing off the gallery to all who attended the reception. "We loved having the gallery and didn't want to see it go", says Mazin Abu-Ghazala, Director of Operations - Pediatric Outpatient Services at Hope. We continue to search for other venues around the country to host the "i have a voice" Traveling Gallery. If you have a place for the Gallery, please e-mail ihaveavoic@gigisplayhouse.org.

-Jacki, GiGi's *i have a voice* Project Manager



The "i have a voice" photo gallery visited Hope Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn, IL throughout May and June. Hundreds of people enjoyed the gallery as they walked through the main lobby of the hospital. Both employees and visitors alike were touched by GiGi's mission. I grew up in the neighboring suburb of Evergreen Park and was thrilled to help spread awareness on the south side. My seven

i am me!

Me \mè\ pronoun – a life to be celebrated

The 2012 GiGi's Awareness Calendar is inspirational, beautiful and empowering! Each page is filled

with phrases from children with Down syndrome showing you - and the world- their beauty and potential!

Order yours today at www.gigisplayhouse.org!



GIGI's Playhouse News

McHenry, IL

Wow! Our 2nd Annual McHenry Warriors Field Day was a huge success! We had almost 30 Varsity football players plan and carryout a fantastic morning of fun for the kids from our playhouse. Each child was partnered with 1 or 2 football players for the events. The biggest hit was the 300+ water balloons! Never underestimate the accuracy of our kids when they have a big ball player to aim for! Besides getting a trophy at the end, all of the kids will all get a free pass to a home football game this fall to cheer on their partners from the Field Day. What a wonderful awareness opportunity for all involved.

Jen Hora said, "As a parent it was such a wonderful event. It was so wonderful to see those high school kids working so hard to let the kids enjoy their special day on the "big field" and to allow us parents to sit back a little and take some well deserved time to watch our kids and the wonderful smiles that were on their faces! It's nice to also see that the older kids are opening their hearts and minds to awareness of others and their disabilities. A day like that opened their eyes more then maybe they might be inclined in the future to stand up for them or share their experiences with other teenagers about kids with disabilities. I know my two boys just LOVED the event. They held on to their trophies throughout the day and told everyone they saw about it. I could see in their eyes and in their voices what it meant to them and for that I am thankful to GiGi's and to the football team and their coaches. Thank you for organizing this...we will for sure be there next year!!"



Save the Date:
September 18, 2011
4th Annual Getting
Down with Fashion
Show!

Rockford, IL

Good old summertime!

That is what the communities surrounding Rockford, IL. thought when they were pepped with Lemonade Stands representing GiGi's Playhouse Rockford this past month. What kick-started the fundraising to open our Playhouse last year grew into 10 Lemonade stands this summer! A contest was held for the best decorated Lemonade Stand with the Frieden Family of Machesney Park and Bohm Family of Beloit, WI sharing top honors of splitting a Volcano Falls Gift Certificate. A total of \$3300.30 was raised! Way to go families and friends, all in honor of GiGi's and the simplistic summertime favorite, Lemonade!



"Kaylee Swan and her mom, Laurie Anderson set up a lemonade stand in front of their house with friends. They collected \$112.00 for GiGi's Rockford."

Des Moines, IL

Katherine Hutchinson sent us a volunteer submission through the National Website. She is a graphic designer who wanted to offer her services. As it happened, we had a few projects for her right away! She designed a newspaper ad and a billboard design. The billboard design was also used for our new banner! We are so appreciative of our wonderful volunteer. She does brilliant work and we are so glad she chose us! Thank you Katherine!



Juice Can Lids Please save your frozen juice concentrate can lids for us. We are using them for our "Sight Word Reading Program."



Save the dates -

Every Sunday from 3-4 pm is Signing Time Class
Friday Friends Group from 7-9 pm is for ages 18 and up
9/1 Play group for kids ages 3 - 4
9/10 New Parents Group at 9:00 am
9/17 Yoga for teens & adults at 9:00 am, Yoga for ages 12 and under at 10:00 am, Craft and Story with Ms. Jo at 11:00 am
9/20 Car Seat Clinic for Children Special Needs and Pizza Night at GiGi's
9/24 All Day Scrapbooking Event
9/25 Fall/ Winter Literacy Meet and Greet is from 1 - 2 pm Tutoring sessions will begin the week of Oct 3rd.

Check our online calendar for additional activities!

Hoffman, IL

Crawlers!

We had a new family attend our crawlers group this month - a 1-year-old with Down syndrome, her parents and three cousins of the baby. They found out about GiGi's because they saw someone with a GiGi's t-shirt at a Chucky Cheese in South Bend, Indiana! They live in Indianapolis, but came all the way up to the Playhouse to see what we're about. We spent a lot of time talking to the grandfather about our programs and Down syndrome in general. Cathy, our Physical Therapist host of the Crawlers group, worked with the mom and baby. They filled out a new family form, we gave them some material and calendars, and Cathy is going to put them in contact with a therapist friend of hers in Indy. I also gave them a card so they can call with any other questions. All the connections from a tshirt in Indiana - It was all really remarkable!

Join us the 2nd Saturday of each month for 2 and Under, Crawlers and Hop, Skip and Jumpers! Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to see dates and times!

Making a Difference

At Open Play, Kristin brought a check for the Hoffman Playhouse that her aunt's book club in Vegas had written on behalf of Kristins daughter. Every month, they read a book and then pick a charity to donate to. They are so impressed with the Literacy program at GiGi's and how it helps kids and adults around the nation with reading skills, that they donated to the Literacy program!

GIGI's Playhouse News

Quad Cities, IL/IA

Excitement and anticipation surround GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities as we prepare for our October Grand Opening! We have had an outpouring of support from our wonderful volunteer painters and carpenters who have shared their time and talent to breathe life into our Playhouse.

Another source of excitement came from Rock Island County Beef for Youth who hosted our very first public check presentation at the Rock Island County Fair! This group of young people are taught how to raise a prize steer, and with the help of volunteers, mentors, and sponsors, are also taught how to give back to the community. This year, GiGi's Playhouse QC was honored to be the recipient of \$1000 from Beef for Youth to help get our Playhouse going! Following the check presentation, we were able to take a trip



through the cattle barn to see all of the hard work these kids put into caring for their cattle. We look forward to nurturing this new relationship with these amazing kids.



To make this check presentation even more special, it was a reminder of our sweet angel Nate who earned his wings four years ago and would have celebrated his 7th birthday on August 19. Nate has been the inspiration and driving force behind GiGi's Playhouse QC, and cows were his favorite animal. Throughout all of his medical complications, he was always good for a, "Mmmmmooooooo" followed by his beautiful smile and contagious laugh. Here's to you, Nate and Beef for Youth....we look forward to continuing to spread your message of the beauty that individuals with Down syndrome have to offer.

SIoux CITY, IA

Spotlight on Literacy...

The Sioux City Playhouse has been busy with Literacy tutoring! This summer, a young man named Keagan Funke began coming to the Playhouse for literacy. Keagan is 14 years old. His interests include baseball, playing the guitar, music, dancing, drawing, working out and his favorite holiday is Halloween!

Up to this point, he hadn't enjoyed reading at home or school and decided he wanted to be a better reader, so his parents decided to sign him up for the GiGi's Playhouse Literacy Program! Through various assessment tools, his tutor, Sharon was able to figure out the level he was on and choose books that were appropriate for him. He has a new found attitude towards reading and has gained great confidence. He now enjoys reading with his family and going to literacy tutoring each week. He loves to learn new words in all types of reading material! He is especially fond of books about space and sharks! "Just seeing him READING on his own is the best part!" says his mom, Jenee.

His parents are so proud of him and are so pleased with the progress he has made from the Literacy program. "We thought it was only for the little kids," says his dad, Neil. They quickly found that it worked for him and they look forward to his future success in the program.

Obviously, you can see that the literacy program is for all ages! Children at any age can start at their own individual level and become successful readers! If you would like to be a part of this wonderful program as a tutor or if you have a child with Down syndrome and want to get them involved in the tutoring program, email Jenni at literacysc@gigisplayhouse.org (subject: TUTOR or CHILD to be TUTORED).



The Fall Literacy Program has already begun and will run from Sept. 5 - Nov. 19, 2011. If you would like to get your child on the waiting list for the Winter Session, contact Jenni at literacysc@gigisplayhouse.org ! educate. inspire. achieve

Fox Valley, IL

When 3 1/2 year old Carrie began the literacy program, her Mom was hoping she could put together the letters she was learning and start to make strides towards reading. "I honestly didn't know what to expect, but I had heard positive feedback from another parent about the program and thought it was worth exploring. At first, I was worried she wouldn't be ready, but her tutor was very intuitive and really worked with Carrie at her level and in ways that kept her engaged and excited to learn. I was thrilled to watch her learn to identify words and once it clicked, she was off and running!" If you are interested in training to be a tutor, or to enroll your child in the program, contact the Playhouse at foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org



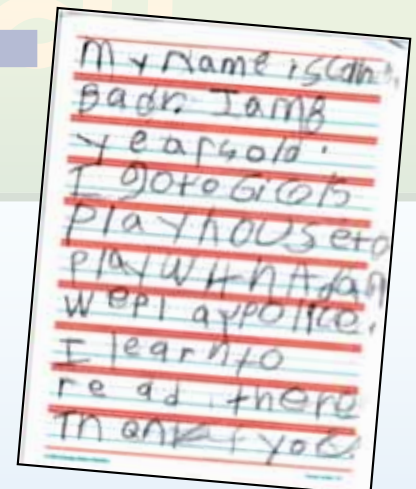
a student and tutor work on word groups

Save the date:
4th annual Tour de GiGi's bike ride
Sunday Sept. 18th
start location Oswego East High School
21, 42 and 64 mile routes, \$30 per person. Register at www.gigisplayhouse.org

Chicago, IL

Why I go to GiGi's Playhouse
By Colin Baar, Age 8

Save the Date
September 18th, 2011
GiGi's Playhouse Chicago -
Teen Drama Film Festival
10am - 12pm
Landmark Century Centre
Cinema
2828 North Clark St



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

nonprofit organization

u.s. postage

paid

schaumburg, il

permit no. 93



2012 Calendars are here!

Call your local
Playhouse or go to
www.gigisplayhouse.org
to order yours today!!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Carsten on a billboard in Des Moines, IA!

Bigger than Life!!

There are billboards featuring our kids not only in
Chicago but in DesMoines too

What great awareness!

Be sure to go to www.gigisplayhouse.org
to see your local Playhouse calendar!

Want to read more inspirational
stories? Each Playhouse has a blog and
a facebook page with current stories!

What an Honor!

The NDSC conference was held in
San Antonio this year and GiGi's was
chosen as the recipient for National
Parent Group Award! We are honored
to be recognized for this award and
dedicate it to all the families we serve,
the board members who tirelessly oversee their Playhouses, and
the thousands of volunteers that make the Playhouses run!



Atlanta and New York have found their locations!
Look for info about a grand opening soon!!
Be sure to check www.gigisplayhouse.org for updates!

Be a Hero...

9th Annual Chicagoland Buddy Walk

Oct 9, 2011 • 1-5 PM • Cantigny • Wheaton, IL

www.chicagolandbuddywalk.org

(815) 272-1068

Funds raised go to NDSS and Chicagoland DS groups



Join us on Facebook
Scan the QR code (the funny square)
for an easy link

