



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

December 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.PLAY (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  
866.946.PLAY (7529)

**Quad Cities**  
3906 38th Ave Moline, IL 61265  
309.762.PLAY (7529)

**Coming soon:**  
New York, NY  
Mexico

## A Message from GiGi and the National Office...

DEAR FRIENDS,  
THANK YOU FOR GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE.  
I LEARN TO READ, DO MATH, CHEERLEADING,  
MEET NEW FRIENDS AND PLAY.  
Jessica is my BFF!  
LOVE  
GiGi



What she didn't write here (but would have if I let her!) are the things that she tells me everyday, "I want to be a teenager, I want my license, I want to go to college, I want a job". She watches all of her favorite Disney stars

progress in life and she wants to be on that same path. She gives 100% to everything she does, but no matter how hard she tries she will still be judged by people because she wears her diagnosis on her face. Did you know that 3 out of 4 kids with special needs will be bullied? The worst part is 80% of people will stand by and let it happen. Yes, 80% (www.cnn.com). What is GiGi's doing to change this? Our national awareness campaigns and our educational programming are a catalyst for change by giving a voice to our kids, our siblings, our families, and or communities, which in turn will give a voice to anyone with a disability.

We are able to do all of these things because of people like you who support the Playhouse. Building the infrastructure to support such growth has been a challenge but our 2012 plan is full of initiatives, projects and deliverables that will ensure our success and the success of our many Playhouses to come! With that comes the

success of the children and families served by the Playhouses.

Down syndrome is the largest chromosomal disorder, yet we are the least funded. By helping individuals with Down syndrome reach their potential, we are laying the ground work for acceptance – not only for our kids but for everyone. One Playhouse, one community, one child at a time. Thank you for helping us make this happen!

**Over a million** people across the country have viewed the i have a voice Traveling Gallery.

- + **Thousands of kids** with Down syndrome are participating in our educational programs.
- + **Hundreds** of siblings are joining forces to show the world the potential in their sibling.
- + **Multiple** GiGi's billboards are up around the country eradicating stereotypes.
- + **THREE** new Playhouses opened around the country this year.
- + **The FIRST** International Playhouse is getting ready to open in Mexico.

### Equals=

An **INFINITE** number of perceptions changed, kids being educated, communities and countries opening their hearts and minds, kids with Down syndrome being included and a better world for us all!

*Read on to learn how your local GiGi's Playhouse is changing lives daily in your community!*

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams"*

-Eleanor Roosevelt



Meet the GiGi's Playhouse Des Moines, IA Board of Directors: Megan Christofferson (President), Daniell Bargstadt (Vice President), Jen Meston (Treasurer), Gretchen Baldwin (Secretary), Kathy Anderson, Dr. William Howard, Eric Land, Troy Hugen, Christine Rodda, Meagan Wortock. Not pictured: Shannon Rudolph, Jennifer Freeseaman. To become a Member of the GiGi's Playhouse Des Moines Board of Directors please contact us at desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org.



Meet your GiGi's Playhouse Staff. Lauren Reeves recently celebrated her 1 year anniversary as our Site Coordinator. Dee Dee Van De Krol joined us as our Administrative Assistant in September.



THANK YOU to our 2012 Gala Committee! We meet the first Monday of the month at 6:30pm, please join. We are seeking corporate sponsors, auction and raffle items-if you have any leads please contact us at desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org. To purchase your tickets to the Gala go to: www.events.org/ihavevoicedesmoines!

# GIGI's Playhouse News

## **"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened"-Dr Seuss**

We would definitely consider this a "year of growth" for our little Playhouse that could! We have 20 families in our New Family Group. We rolled out new Programs like our Signing & Yoga Classes, Language Group, Latino Group, 2 and Under Skill Builders, Gage the Therapy Dog, and our Dad's Group! We continued with our Open Plays, Teen Tastic, Friday Friends, Music Therapy, Story & Craft Time, and Playhouse Pals! WHEW!!!

There is something for everyone at our Playhouse! We invite Families to bring along grandparents, cousins, aunts & uncles, neighbors and friends to enjoy Fun & Awareness to any Playhouse event!



## **"Every student can learn, just not on the same day, or in the same way"**

**-George Evans**

We have successfully completed 3 Literacy Tutoring Sessions with over 40 Learners. In addition to the Literacy 1-on-1 tutoring we have 22 Learners in our Sight Word Program.

"The combination of the literacy program and sight word program has allowed Carsten to keep up with his peers in reading."

-Megan Christofferson

"Literacy program tools made learning fun for Shea - greatly increasing his attention span."- Cynthia Hilsabeck

If you would like to have your child be a part of this great free program please contact us at: [desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org)



## **"If you don't speak up when it matters, when would it matter that you speak?"**

**-Jim Hightower**

We were featured on KCCI News promoting Advocacy with stories and commercials. The Des Moines Register ran stories featuring our Playhouse and the positive impact we have on our community. Dr William Howard from Mercy Pediatrics, hosted a Grand Rounds Educational Session on Down syndrome that had a huge response from medical staff. The auditorium was packed, and the message all of them received included the work we are doing at GiGi's! The Governor of Iowa declared August 27, 2011 Down syndrome Awareness Day in an official proclamation! We celebrated with our 5k run, Up for Down Walk and our Golf Tourney! We have 4 billboards up in the greater Des Moines area featuring local children with Down syndrome. The message is simple.... "i have a voice! Help me share it with the world!" We are partnering with several colleges and physician groups to get our future professionals engaged and excited about our future.

## **"Destiny grants us our wishes, but in its own way, in order to give us something beyond our wishes."**

**-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

In 2011 we were blessed to receive grants from the following places. We are always on the lookout for grants and matching funds opportunities, if you have any leads or ideas please contact Lauren at [desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org). And again THANK YOU for your donation, in kind gift, and generosity!

- Ronald McDonald House Charities-\$4000
- Grant for Literacy program Variety Club of Des Moines-\$3567
- Grant for New parent Binders & Books Italian American Society of Des Moines-\$2500 Donation
- Mason High Twelve-\$2000 Grant for Circles Paradigm

# GIGI's Playhouse News

**“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined”**

**-Henry David Thoreau**

Looking to the future of 2012 we expect to see more growth in many ways! We have laid out some goals for the Playhouse and with your help we can achieve them!

- **Math Program:** We expect to be trained and ready to start tutoring students of all ages in math by the end of 2012. We will acquire all the materials and training needed.
- **Make more technology available** at the Playhouse including iPads, more computers, and software, etc. This will allow students and parents to explore universally designed solutions for instructional, behavioral and social skill development.
- **Place “New Parent” Binders & Books in Hospitals** across Central Iowa. We are working to get these binders out to every new family at the time of birth & diagnosis to start their learning and help to answer any questions. Along with letting them know all of the programs and people available at GiGi's Playhouse to help them.
- **Create and launch the “i have a voice” Iowa Gallery** featuring Iowans with Down syndrome. This Gallery will be displayed in malls, fairs, hospitals, libraries, churches and any other venue.
- **Implement the ‘Circles Paradigm’** to teach people with disabilities appropriate social boundaries and levels of trust in the community.



**“Nothing is Impossible; the word itself is I’m Possible!”**

**-Audrey Hepburn**

To continue this rate of growth we need YOU!! Please continue to support GiGi's Playhouse-Des Moines anyway you can...donate, volunteer, spread the word, have your company become a corporate sponsor, attend our events, programs and fundraisers! There are so many ways to get involved-just do it! Some examples would be:

- Your donation of \$20 will provide everyday supplies at the Playhouse.
- Your donation of \$50 will provide 2 Families with New Parent Binders
- Your donation of \$150 will provide 1 student with access to our Technology Lab.
- Your donation of \$300 will provide 2 students with Math Program learning.
- With your \$500 or more donation your name will appear on our Donor Wall and will help to create happy memories at the Playhouse allowing us to purchase equipment, technology and a variety of learning tools for all ages.

To make a donation simply mail your donation in the envelope provided (mark DES MOINES PLAYHOUSE) or go online to [www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org) location Des Moines click the Donate Button!

GiGi's Playhouse  
0430 New York Ave Suite A  
Urbandale, IA 50322

nonprofit organization

u.s. postage

**paid**

schaumburg, il

permit no. 93

## WOW!

Check out our NEW local newsletters!  
Look inside to see how far your local  
Playhouse has come and how you can  
help continue changing lives!

**2012 calendars  
are here!** Give  
a gift of love and  
acceptance and  
help us change  
the way people see our kids!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

one night. nine cities. two countries. your voice.  
save the date!

The 2nd Annual

have **i** voice

International Gala  
Saturday, February 25, 2012

GiGi's  
PLAYHOUSE

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers



Venues in:  
Chicago  
Sioux City  
New York  
Quad Cities  
Des Moines  
Twin Cities  
Rockford  
Atlanta  
Querétaro, Mexico

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[www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)