



**GiGi's  
PLAYHOUSE**  
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers  
Hoffman Estates

educate. inspire. achieve

# Newsletter



## The New Parent Program

Jaimie Rios, Board President and Olivia's mom was aware of the importance of the support from other parents when she first visited GiGi's Playhouse and wanted to share that very special experience with other new parents so she created the New Parent program which had their first meeting in June.

The program has already been a great success. Parents of children ages 2 and under have been meeting and sharing thoughts and ideas, as well as gaining insight into the GiGi's culture. These parents are helping each other understand the Down syndrome diagnosis, navigate new intervention, welcome first time visitors to GiGi's, and brainstorm program ideas along with helping redesign the Celebration Packet! Join us the last Thursday of the month, August 30, 2012 at 11:00 am, for conversation, information and laughter! This is a wonderful way to spend time at the Playhouse with your child.....see you then!

## Summer Literacy and Math Programs are a Wonder!

The summer session has taken off with great energy. We have over 20 tutors and over 35 students involved in these programs! Our tutors are the most amazing volunteers that give so freely of their time, knowledge, and talent. They greet their families with warm smiles and lots of energy. Lisa, Kyle's mom shared her thoughts about the program with us. "I just have to thank you again for fitting Kyle into the summer literacy program....



our first session was just absolutely, positively, wonderful. Claudia (tutor) is just amazing. Kyle and I learned so much in just an hour. I know that he is going to gain so much from this program and I've already learned some great tips for helping him get there!" We love to hear stories like this about our literacy and math programs; please continue to share them with us!



Fall registration information will be mailed by the 2nd week in August with a deadline of August 24, 2012 so watch your mail.

Calling all therapists and educators wanting to lead a program, please contact Lori at [heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org) to see what program leaders we need. We are also looking for some core volunteers to fill roles such as Literacy Scheduler, Program Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator. To get involved, just email us with your interests and together we will continue to build a happy, supportive and educational GiGi's Playhouse!!

## Cheer Gems!!

Our award winning Gems Cheerleading team has already had several performances under their belt this season. They performed at the Relay for Life event at Barrington High School and at the GiGi's Playhouse 5k Fun Run, Walk, and Dash for Down syndrome in front of over 3,000 attendees and of course were amazing! The children put in many hours of practice with the Barrington High School cheerleaders and have a blast while doing it. We are so fortunate to have such a dedicated group of teens who take time out of their busy lives to share their skills with our kids. Every practice and performance is fun for all! For more information about the Gems Cheerleading program including participation, please email the Playhouse at [heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org).



## L-M-N-O-P (Language, Music 'n Our Peeps) Program Kicks Off!

Seven families participated on July 10, the 1st meeting of this new program which was created by a mom who volunteers at the Quad Cities Playhouse and then duplicated by one of our newest volunteers. Sign language, music, dancing, story-time, and language stimulation strategies for infants and young children are explored with the help of facilitator Rebecca Morris. Rebecca has so much energy and knowledge to share that the time just flies by leaving everyone looking forward to the next week. Her background in speech-language pathology gives her so many exceptional resources to use for continued group enrichment. We meet on Tuesdays at 10:00 am through August 14 and would love for you to stop in.



## Help Us Welcome the Johanson Family!



The newest addition to the Hoffman Playhouse is James Erik Johanson (we call him Jimmy) and his parents Gust and Tina! At their first visit, Jimmy was only 16 days old and chose to sleep through most of their visit, though it gave several volun-

teers a chance to hold this precious newborn. The family including Gust's dad – a very proud grandpa, participated in the New Parent program and Open Play. Tina learned about GiGi's while Jimmy was in the N.I.C.U. and reached out to us as soon as time allowed. Our New Parent program leader, Jaimie Rios, contacted the family and invited them to join us the next week which they did. We are so happy they spent part of their day with us. We look forward to their future visits and wholeheartedly welcome them to the GiGi's family!

## Hop, Skip & Jumpers Program Welcomes a New Leader!

Amazing volunteers show up at our door each day and we feel so fortunate to have them here. One of those folks is Samantha Slager, our new program leader for Hop, Skip & Jumpers. Samantha is a newly certified special education teacher having graduated from Northern Illinois University. She shared with us that throughout her internship hours she was connected with children that have Down syndrome and couldn't help but fall in love with them (we understand). The desire to help make a difference in the lives of our children and families is what brought her to GiGi's and we are now thrilled she will be bringing new life to this program.

You can join us on the 2nd Saturday of the month (starting in September – the August program will meet on August 4 from 11:30 – 12:30 due to a schedule conflict), from 11:30 am – 12:30 pm to participate in this program which focuses on 3 – 5 year olds. This is a semi-structured program set up similar to a classroom. The children meet together for circle time at the start and then transition into other activities throughout the program. The participants will enjoy friendship, practice good social skills and participate in interactive play through creative and educational activities for preschool and kindergarten aged children. Contact the Playhouse at [heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org) for more information or to tell us you will attend!



### Nuestros Angeles Program Has a Tight Bond!

The families that attend this monthly program on the 2nd Sunday of the month from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm have created a very special closeness. They attended the 5k Fun Run, Walk and Dash for Down syndrome as a group, celebrate birthdays together in the Playhouse, and still join together when the 2nd Sunday for example fell on Mother's Day. A very special extended family has been created where all of the families realize a special connection to one another, support one another and enjoy wonderful meals together each time they meet which is why I am told the program never really ends at 1:00pm.

If this program is of interest to you, please contact the Playhouse at [heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org) and we will put you in touch with Blanca and Carlos who are the wonderful hosts of this very special program.



## Save the Date!!

**Sunday, October 7, 2012 for the  
9th Annual GiGifest**



to be held in the parking lot!  
We will have games, food, fun,  
and the ever-popular 'red car-  
pet walk' of our Calendar kids.

## July Calendar

- 23 Gems Cheerleading Practice, 5:00 – 6:00 pm
- 26 New Parent Program, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
- 26 Open Play, 12:30 – 2:00 pm
- 27 Friday Friends, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
- 31 L-M-N-O-P Program, 10:00 – 11:00 am

## August Calendar

- 1 Special Intentions Support Group, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
- 2 Open Play, 12:30 – 2:00 pm
- 4 Hop, Skip & Jumpers, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm (this month only on the 1st Saturday)
- 6 Gems Cheerleading Practice, 5:00 – 6:00 pm
- 7 L-M-N-O-P Program, 10:00 – 11:00 am
- 11 Crawlers, 9:00 – 10:00 am
- 12 Nuestros Angeles, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
- 14 L-M-N-O-P Program, 10:00 – 11:00 am
- 16 Open Play, 12:30 – 2:00 pm
- 23 Open Play, 12:30 – 2:00 pm
- 24 Friday Friends, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
- 25 Kids Club, 10:30
- 30 New Parent Program, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
- 30 Open Play, 12:30 – 2:00 pm



GiGi's Playhouse  
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**Check out our library of videos about GiGi's Playhouse. Go to [www.youtube.org/gigisplayhouse](http://www.youtube.org/gigisplayhouse) to view. Enjoy!**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Friday Friends Know How to Kick It into High Gear!

Friday Friends is a very special group that meets at GiGi's Playhouse on the fourth Friday of the month from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. Past program themes have included Game Night, Spring Formal, Mardi Gras, and a Jam Session to name a few. This is a group of adults 18 and older who spend a fun night socializing and celebrating with their peers and the community. The July program will be their Annual Kick-Ball game and Ice Cream Social on Friday, July 27, 2012.

Our very own Christine Maxwell and her mom Diane attended the National Down Syndrome Congress National Convention in Washington, DC in mid July; Diane is the Friday Friends 'hostess with the mostest'. Their plans included visits with the Senate offices of Dick Durbin and Mark Kirk along with House Members. Christine and 20 of her adult friends attended a Gala with Members of Congress. They will have many stories to share from this amazing experience.

Save the date of August 24, 2012 for the end of summer gathering! Please send an email to [heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org) or call 847-885-7529 to receive more information about Friday Friends or to participate in this fun program!



## Yet another program comes to life at GiGi's; the 3-4 Playgroup!

A brand new volunteer has arrived at the Playhouse to lead the 3-4 Playgroup. The program will meet the 4th Saturday of the month at 9:00 am, beginning on August 25, 2012. This program helps promote networking and socialization for families with children ages 3-4 and is held in a casual environment. The program leader is Melanie Green, a licensed speech-language pathologist who works in the area of early intervention. Melanie is new to the area, heard about GiGi's and wanted to work with our wonderful families. We are thrilled to have Melanie joining the GiGi's family!

If you want more information about this new playgroup or want to RSVP, please email us at [heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:heprograms@gigisplayhouse.org) or call 847-885-7529.