



Gigi's PLAYHOUSE™

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

www.gigisplayhouse.org

2013 Press Kit



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

Fact Sheet

Overview

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta is a nonprofit Down syndrome awareness, education, and therapeutic center dedicated to providing free therapeutic programs to individuals with Down syndrome, also known as T21, and their families. GiGi's Playhouse is positioned to address the gross motor, fine motor, and intellectual development of children with T21. The earlier aggressive therapeutic interventions take place in these areas the greater the possibility that GiGi's participants will achieve a more independent life. GiGi's addresses these needs by offering, for free, more than 26 different literacy tutoring programs, a math program, muscle toning exercises, physical, occupational, and speech therapies, family support, social events and a vast referrals network.

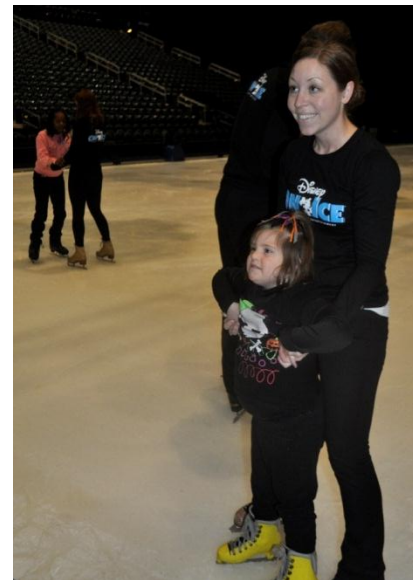
Located in Midtown's Amsterdam Walk shopping complex, the Atlanta Playhouse has served more than 170 families with life-altering results. The free programming means that children born with T21 will have a place not only to learn and overcome life's barriers, but also have a place to belong.

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta is one of 15 Playhouses that have opened in the past nine years and there are more in the works. Starting out as a local center in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, the first Playhouse evolved into an international phenomenon driven by the free programming provided by an outstanding team of devoted volunteers.

With one in 691 babies born with T21 in the United States today, we know that by providing the tools for individuals to reach their full potential, we can change the perceptions that people may have of the illness, resulting in a world that is empowered with knowledge, compassion and inspiration.



GiGi's Playhouse Attendees Having Fun with the Atlanta Falcons



Ice Skating with Disney On Ice



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Vision

Our vision is to see a world where individuals with T21 are accepted and embraced in their families, schools and communities.

Mission

Our mission is to increase positive awareness of T21 through national campaigns, educational programs, and by empowering individuals with T21, their families and the community.

2013 Programs at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta

- Art Class
- Guitar Lessons with Josh Kalter
- Karate Class
- Learn to Hop, Skip & Jump
- Learning to Crawl, Physical Therapy
- Learning to Walk, Physical Therapy
- Literacy Tutoring
- Music Class with Alita & Kathleen
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Tying Shoes





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GiGi's Playhouse Locations

- Atlanta, GA
- Bradley Bourbonnais, IL
- Chicago, IL
- Des Moines, IO
- Fox Valley, IL
- Hoffman Estates, IL
- Manhattan, NY
- McHenry, IL
- Mexico City, MX (opening soon)
- New York, NY
- Oak Forest, IL
- Quad Cities, IO
- Rockford, IL
- Sioux City, IO
- Syracuse, NY
- Twin Cities, MN

Our Websites

Website: <http://gigisatlanta.com/>

Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/11SPiyV>

Twitter: [@GiGisAtlanta](https://twitter.com/GiGisAtlanta)

Contact Information

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta

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Frequently Asked Questions

Who is involved in GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta?

Children with T21 and their families come to the Playhouse for free therapy-styled classes, tutoring, support groups, monthly speaker series and a vast referrals network.

Volunteers are used to support the following areas at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta:

- Administrative
- Committee membership
- Educational programs
- Group volunteering
- Literacy tours
- Social events
- Unpaid internships

Certified therapists, doctors, educators, students and engaged parents make in-kind donations to GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta through sharing the gift of their time, talents and treasures.

How do I get involved?

To sign up please visit [Volunteer Spot](#) or email volunteerATL@gigisplayhouse.org.

Is there a time minimum with which I must volunteer?

General volunteers: there is no minimum on the amount of time a general volunteer can help out at the Playhouse.

Literacy and Math volunteers: Our Literacy and Math programs are 12-week-long programs. We request that volunteers in these areas donate a minimum of one 30-60 minute session a week for 12 weeks to ensure consistency in education.

How can I get my child involved in programs?

Families and their children are welcome to visit GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta at any time. All of our programs are posted on our Facebook page as Events on the Places page. Find us on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/1ISPiYV>. Send us an email at atlanta@gigisplayhouse.org or call us at 404-872-PLAY (7529).

You are also encouraged to look at the Atlanta Calendar on the GiGi's Playhouse national website to find scheduled events to attend. This calendar can be found at <http://gigisplayhouse.org/atlanta/atlanta-calendar>.

Does my child need a baseline assessment before coming to GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta?

None of our services require baseline assessments prior to coming to GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. If a family wants one, we hold baseline assessments at no charge for the Literacy and Math programs at our center. All our programs are free.

How does GiGi's handle children who speak languages other than English?

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta ensures that all visitors are comfortable no matter what language they may speak. We have volunteers and staff who speak Spanish and French. We also print our forms and brochures in Spanish.

Is there a referral network for specialists in the T21 field that I can access?

Yes, our site coordinator has the resources to connect you with T21 specialists and other families.



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How do the GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta programs align with state education standards?

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta keeps our state education standards in mind to ensure that our curriculum is aligned with what is being taught in schools.

Does GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta have plans for more playhouses in Atlanta?

Yes, the cost to run the Atlanta Playhouse is approximately \$110,000 a year, and our goal is to raise enough funding to build a second Playhouse in the near future.

Who sponsors GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta?

We are thankful to our individual and corporate sponsors and their involvement with GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. Because of their generosity, we are able to provide the services to educate, support and inspire our kids to achieve a normal, independent life.

GiGi's Playhouse is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation, tax ID# 20-0058563. All donations to GiGi's Playhouse are tax deductible. The 2013 list of sponsors include:



Oldcastle®



Absolutely.™





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Sponsor Websites:

Accenture	www.accenture.com
The Coca-Cola Company	www.thecoca-colacompany.com
Delta Air Lines	www.delta.com
Dermody Properties	www.dermody.com/
DSAA	www.dsaatl.org
Frigoglass	www.frigoglass.com
Halpern Enterprises, Inc.	www.halpern-online.com
Kantar Retail	www.kantar.com/
Oldcastle Lawn & Garden, Inc.	www.oldcastle.com
PriceWaterhouse Coopers	www.pwc.com/us
The SKate Foundation	www.theskatefoundation.com
Stan Johnson Company	www.stanjohnsonco.com
State Bank & Trust Company	www.statebt.com
Stonemont Financial	www.stonemontfinancial.com
Sutherland	www.sutherland.com



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The SKate Foundation Award Winners

2011

Emory University Department of Genetics Down Syndrome Clinic

The Down Syndrome Center at Emory University, established in 2003, includes education, research, and an important clinical component, the Down Syndrome Clinic. The primary goal of the clinic is to meet the needs of individuals with Down syndrome and their families. In addition, through collaboration with the Down Syndrome Association of Atlanta, the clinic is able to develop initiatives to maximize the potential of children with Down syndrome in Georgia.

Our clinical staff includes: Dr. Jeannie Visootsak, Medical Director and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician; Heather Clark, MS, Clinic Coordinator and Genetic Counselor; Adrienne Perkins, EdS, Educational Specialist; Elizabeth Sablon, MPH, Spanish Interpreter; and Helen Smith, RN, Research Coordinator.

(Picture: Adrienne Mulligan and Dr. Jeannie Visootsak)



2012

Mayor Kasim Reed

Kasim Reed was inaugurated as Atlanta's 59th Mayor in January 2010. Prior to his election, he spent 11 years as a member of the Georgia General Assembly. Reed has served his alma mater, Howard University as its youngest General Trustee since 2002 and remains a member of the Board of Trustees.

Reed's civic leadership and service have been nationally recognized on programs such as **Meet the Press**, **The Charlie Rose Show** and **John King USA**. He has been featured in publications including **The New York Times**, **The Wall Street Journal** and **Black Enterprise**.

Reed's work on behalf of children is founded in his own testimonial story. As the son of divorced parents who diligently cared for him, his leadership to ensure that latch key kids of the current generation have access to education, mentors and leadership training has been superlative. Within one year of his inauguration, he led the city to re-open all of Atlanta's public recreation centers. Repositioned as "Centers of Hope", these lifestyle learning facilities offer programs from the Boys & Girls Clubs and the YMCA. He also ensured the centers stayed open for years to come thanks to generous partners who provide corporate and philanthropic support.

In 2006, Reed also opened The Orion School, a non-profit, private school with special needs programs that educate children with neurobehavioral challenges like ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome and anxiety related issues.



Mayor Kasim Reed and Adrienne Mulligan



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2013

Josh Kalter

Alpharetta resident Josh Kalter teaches weekly guitar lessons at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta, a Down syndrome awareness, education and therapeutic center, where parents and children can have a place to get therapeutic play and a sense of community. Josh works with children ages nine and up in six-week sessions, teaching them guitar basics.

Josh, a Johns Creek High School student, said the guitar lessons bring together two things he enjoys: working with special needs children and music.

"I've always worked with kids who have special needs and it's a really rewarding experience for me," he said. "When you see a kid get a chord right the first time, they get a smile that's priceless." In addition to giving his time to the children at GiGi's, Josh made the guitar lessons more interactive and accommodating by taking money he saved to purchase five guitars for the center.

"When I came to my parents with the idea they were really supportive, so we started looking for guitars to let the kids use," he said. "I did a lot of searching around, we found these guitars and the rest has been magical."

Josh's lessons emulate the mission of GiGi's by empowering children through developing different skills. GiGi's is privileged to honor Josh for his melodic contributions to the children of the Playhouse with the 2013 award.



Josh Kalter Teaching Young Girl Guitar



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Leadership Biographies

Stephanie Chapman

Site Coordinator for GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta

Stephanie is the site coordinator for GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. A globally-minded, recent MBA graduate, Stephanie has an interest in increasing international awareness for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She first came to GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta to volunteer her time after having an enlightening experience as a tutor and caretaker for a four-year-old with Down syndrome (T21). Wanting to spend more time with the children at the Playhouse, Stephanie became an intern while completing her master's degree in business management from Georgia State University. She based her thesis on GiGi's Playhouse's non-profit model. Stephanie is able to use her unique background involving education and business management to create sustainable business practices for the organization. Seeing her skills put to good use towards a meaningful cause keeps her cheerfully coming to the Playhouse each morning where she now serves more than 175 children with T21 and their families.

Ryan Cook

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member

Sales Executive, IntraLinks

Ryan Cook is a sales executive at IntraLinks, a leading global provider of "Software-as-a-Service" solutions for securely managing content. IntraLinks helps provide cloud-based solutions for more than 800 of the Fortune 1000 organizations to control, track, search and exchange time-sensitive information.

As a father of a son diagnosed with T21, Ryan's involvement with GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta is driven by his passion for building an environment where children with special needs are given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Through his special events work, Ryan is able to manage relationships with sponsors and lead donor outreach efforts for GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. Ryan knows that many families of a child with special needs do not have the resources to pay for therapies, so being able to keep GiGi's Playhouse free-of-charge is the program's key differentiator. The Playhouse provides a place for Ryan, his son and other Atlanta families to call home.

Amy Dresser

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member

Partner at Homrich, Klein & Associates

Amy Dresser is a partner at Homrich, Klein & Associates (HKA) where she provides permanent placement services for accounting and finance professionals. The firm's foundation is reflective of Amy's core values of respect, integrity and service. She is a board member and officer of the American Association of Finance and Accounting Recruiters, the largest and oldest affiliation of independent executive recruiting firms in the U.S. Locally, Amy is an active member of the Association for Corporate Growth, The Paideia School finance committee and GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. She became involved with GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta after meeting Playhouse attendee Sara Kate, daughter of Adrienne Mulligan, President of the Atlanta center. Watching the kids reach daily milestones keeps Amy committed to spreading awareness about GiGi's early intervention programs, and the positive impact Amy can have on children with T21.

Pamela Drew

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member

Youth Director, Ansley Golf Club & Realtor, Harry Norman Realtors

In Pamela Drew's role as the youth director at Ansley Golf Club, she had the privilege of working with Sara Kate, daughter of Adrienne Mulligan, president of GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. Pamela saw the difference that early intervention and therapy made in Sara Kate's life and became determined to do whatever she could to provide the same services to all children with T21. As one of the founding members of the Atlanta Playhouse, Pamela experiences pure joy from seeing the children's smiling faces. She continues to assist with fundraising events and to coordinate volunteers to make a difference in the lives and futures of children with T21. Pamela's amicable ability to work with others is one of the main reasons that GiGi's events like the annual "i have a voice" gala are so successful.



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Jennifer Gaffney

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member, Gala Chair
Brokerage Coordinator for Cushman & Wakefield of Georgia, Inc.*

As a brokerage coordinator for the well-respected global commercial real estate icon, Cushman & Wakefield, Jennifer Gaffney is adept at creating long-lasting relationships that leverage values and best practices, ultimately causing good things to happen! In early 2012, Jennifer volunteered as a literacy tutor at the Playhouse, where she had the opportunity to work with students from the Playhouse's vast programs in one-on-one and group settings helping the kids with T21 learn to read. Jennifer also shares information with her seven-year-old bilingual niece with T21 who is involved in a similar program in Paris. With all these touch points, Jennifer fell in love with the community and its people. Seeing the benefits of early intervention and experiencing the joy of learning with the children she served, Jennifer wanted to help this organization even more and reached out to offer more of her valuable resources and time. The result is her current work as 2013 Gala Chair, for The Ritz-Carlton, Atlanta, event on February 2, 2013: "i have a voice".

Scott Jeffries

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member
Financial Advisor with Northwestern Mutual*

As a financial advisor for Northwestern Mutual, Scott's mission is to help his clients attain financial security for their families and businesses. He specializes in developing plans for families with dependents with special needs. He recognizes the importance of working with a team of professionals who are experienced and well versed with these complexities. While sitting on the board of directors for the Down Syndrome Association of Atlanta (DSAA), Scott was recognized as an "Outstanding Volunteer" through his firm's 16th annual community award. DSAA introduced him to the work and volunteer efforts at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. As a parent of a child with T21, Scott felt immediately welcomed in the community, and has served on the board since 2011.

Allison Koenig, MD

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member
Pediatrician at Piedmont Pediatrics*

Dr. Allison Koenig, a board certified pediatrician, attended Harvard University where she received a bachelor's degree in biology. She earned her medical degree from Johns Hopkins University, and stayed in Baltimore for her pediatric residency. Dr. Koenig completed residency in 2001 and joined Atlanta based Piedmont Pediatrics in September 2002. Her involvement with GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta was sparked by her work with patients with T21. Dr. Koenig donates her time to the non-profit organization to provide services and support needed by families of children with T21, and to help these families see the positive aspects of having a child with special needs. She is committed to spreading awareness to the medical community about the inspiring progress happening daily at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta.

Gretchen Lehane

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member
Physical Therapist*

As a 15-year business owner and pediatric physical therapist, Gretchen Lehane is passionate about giving children with disabilities the same joy, freedom and quality of life as children without these challenges. She achieves this commitment by promoting mobility, functional ability and movement. Understanding how children with T21 learn is crucial for parents who wish to facilitate the development of gross motor skills as well as facilitating success in other areas of life including language, education and the development of social skills. "Learn to Crawl," "Learn to Walk" and "Hop, Skip & a Jump" are three of the classes that Gretchen teaches at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. She was referred to GiGi's through a friend and immediately knew she had found a home where she could contribute her expertise to a cause that resonates with her heart. Gretchen experiences joy from her work at the Playhouse as she watches the children grow and develop new milestones. The families that Gretchen has had the wonderful fortune to work with have brought meaning to her life and work as a pediatric physical therapist. She looks forward to the continued strengthening of current programs as well as the continued development of new therapy programs for the growing number of families finding support at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta.



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William (Zack) I. Markwell III

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member
Principal, Stonemont Financial Group*

Zack co-founded Stonemont Financial Group's Real Estate Practice with over eight years of real estate and investment banking experience. Stonemont provides capital for new development and acquisitions of existing net lease real estate across the U.S. and Canada. He began his career in tax and business consulting with KPMG, LLP in Chicago, working with real estate developers and financial services companies. Prior to founding Stonemont, Zack served as an originator for the real estate investment banking division of SunTrust Robinson Humphrey. As one of the principal real estate investment bankers at Stonemont Financial Group, his skills in handling day-to-day financial practices and planning long-term budgets resulted in the perfect formula to assist as treasurer and financial director at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. He heard about the Playhouse following the birth of his son in 2011. He saw the impact being made on the community, and he reached out to board member Adrienne Mulligan, for an opportunity to help. By witnessing the improvements on the lives of the children, families and community volunteers involved at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta, Zack is a firm believer that GiGi's is much more than just a place of service, it is a place to grow.

Adrienne Mulligan

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Founder
President of The SKate Foundation*

Adrienne Mulligan is tireless in her efforts to educate others to help all children with T21. She and her husband, Paul, founded The SKate Foundation, named for their daughter Sara Kate, which has a three-fold mission: to publish and distribute a summary of the basic issues that almost all babies with T21 face, conduct clinical trials which identify early interventions that work and reach more families by supporting the opening of GiGi's Playhouses. When Adrienne's wonderful daughter, Sara Kate, was born she was shocked by the lack of support available for kids with T21 here in Atlanta. She heard about the Playhouse in other cities, visited and experienced firsthand how their education and therapy programs provide the tools which lead to amazing accomplishments and a normal life. So, Adrienne set out to provide a place where children in Atlanta with T21 are learning, thriving and socializing. With this tenacious spirit, she recruited the volunteers, sought donors and opened GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta in 2011. Today, the Playhouse works to raise awareness about T21 and empowers families through free programs for occupational, physical and speech therapies as well as free tutoring in literacy and math. Adrienne is continually in awe of the bright and happy faces she sees day-in and day-out at GiGi's Playhouse, and is so thankful the dream was realized for our local T21 community in Atlanta, and is determined to expand to more Playhouses across the greater metro area and throughout Georgia.

Marna Plaia

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member
Education Director at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta*

Marna Plaia serves as the education director for the literacy and math programs at GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. Marna is involved in the training of tutors, coordinating schedules with families, assisting in grant writing for education programs and continuing to develop current outreach programs. While pregnant with her daughter Ruby, Marna visited the GiGi's Playhouse in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. There she witnessed over 20 different programs designed to help grow and educate children with T21. She knew she had to be a part of an organization dedicated to changing the lives of children with T21. Ruby was born with T21, and Marna now uses her background in social work to make an impact in the lives of kids with T21 and their families.

Raul Trujillo

*GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta Board Member
Regional Sales Manager, The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*

Raul Trujillo has more than 18 years of advertising, consulting and sales experience in print, digital, online, social media, Hispanic and direct marketing. With 10 years of management experience, he has a proven ability to direct a team in a highly competitive sales environment. Raul has a history of leading by example while inspiring loyalty and desire to perform. This history combined with his native Atlantan roots make him the ideal individual to help lead the fundraising and marketing for GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta. As a parent of a child with Down syndrome (T21), he feels strongly about spreading awareness. Raul is a firm believer that early intervention is the key to helping children with T21 succeed. His dedication to education has resulted in powerful fundraising campaigns for GiGi's annual "i have a voice" gala.