



**Gigi's
PLAYHOUSE**
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
Chicago

educate. inspire. achieve

Newsletter



Group Tutoring Makes Students 'Hungry' For Literacy

What began as an experiment to get ready for school has turned into a wild success. Our Group Literacy Tutoring classes brought together parents, students and teachers for some back-to-school readiness, using Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* as a basis to mix math and reading skills.

Each week, the classes used the book as a jumping off point to translate the words in the books into real-world experiences to reinforce learning. As they began, students acted like the titular caterpillar eating through one apple, two pears, three plums, etc. The tutors used our chalkboards and other materials to name the foods and the numbers, providing students with even more visual cues.

In addition to teaching reading and pre-math skills, the group literacy setting served as a reminder of how things work in a classroom setting: teaching kids to take turns and focusing on the teacher during learning time, which should provide an easier transition for kids adjusting from the relative freedom of summer back into the classroom setting.

We owe a big "Thank you" to many people for taking the initiative and making this program a huge success, not the least of whom is our tireless literacy coordinator Debbie Hanrahan. In addition, veteran literacy tutors Amanda Hillmann and Stephanie Ganacopolus, helped put the program together. And we owe another huge thanks to tutors Maxie Lane, Danielle Dano, Dan Lorden, Xenia Basarab and Anna Calif.



What a Weekend!!



In mid-August, families from Playhouses across the country (led by our president Kim Hanna and her family) headed out to Colorado for a long weekend of camping,

hiking and outdoor activities. Proving once again there are no limits on potential, children with Down syndrome, their siblings, parents and experienced guides from the Adaptive Sports Center in Crested Butte, Colo., tackled a ropes course, white water rafting, hiking and a campout under the stars. The hands-down favorite activity, of course, was the rock climbing! Families built lasting memories and challenged themselves in new ways of working together. Let us know if you want to get on an early distribution list for next year's trip.

Volunteer Profile

Lisa Jones has been a tireless and dedicated volunteer since coming to our Playhouse six months ago to volunteer as part of a college class. Recognizing our "phenomenal" environment, Lisa saw a chance to put her skills as a behavior analysis therapist to work, coming to our weekly Open Plays on Wednesday and working with other groups. She even led one of our "Cabin Fever Busters," working with kids to make a Jackson Pollack-style painting (which is featured around our Playhouse). For the past few months, Lisa has also been working as a literacy tutor, teaching 4-year-old Sofia the basics of reading.



"I see myself as being a volunteer for as long as I possibly can," Lisa says. "I feel I have teaching skills that will help children learn, as well as teaching their parents how to best help their children."

We do too, Lisa. Thank you so much for your dedication to our Playhouse.

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

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Save the Date

Anniversary Party
Sunday, Oct. 21 • 11 am–1 pm

Committee Updates

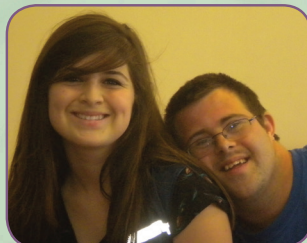
Facilities: A big thank you to the Northcenter Chamber of Commerce for their philanthropic grant to help finance an awning and sign for the outside of our Playhouse. We're currently in the permitting process and hope to have everything ready in time for our anniversary party on October 21.



Fundraising: Down Syndrome Awareness Month is coming, and we want to draw some attention (and dollars) to our Playhouse. In addition to our anniversary party on October 21, we want to create some month-long awareness and fundraising. Perhaps you or your business would like to host a casual

Friday donation drive or some other contribution effort. We're happy to work with you on ideas. Drop us a line at Chicago@gigisplayhouse.org.

Programs: September marks the return of our Teen Drama and Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting classes (which took the summer off), and we're very excited to be back up and running in full swing. In October, we plan to begin a pilot Math Tutoring program and expand our adult programming. Contact us if you're interested.



SEPTEMBER CALENDAR



- 5 Open Play, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 6 Literacy Bookmaking, 6:30-8:30pm
- 8 Meet & Greet 10-11:30 a.m.
- 9 Open Play, 1-3 p.m.
- 10 Fall Literacy Begins
- 11 Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting Class (Group 1) Begins, 4 p.m.
- 12 Open Play, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting Class (Group 2) Begins, 4 p.m.
- 14 Teen Drama Class Begins, 5:30 p.m.
- 15 Math Tutor Training, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 18 Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting Class (Group 1), 4 p.m.
- 19 Open Play, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting Class (Group 2), 4 p.m.
- 20 Volunteer Orientation, 7 p.m.
- 21 Teen Drama Class, 5:30 p.m.
- 23 Open Play, 1-3 p.m.
- 25 Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting Class (Group 1), 4 p.m.
- 26 Open Play, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Fine Motor Skills/Handwriting Class (Group 2), 4 p.m.
- 28 Teen Drama Class, 5:30 p.m.