



Loving a child with Down syndrome is contagious... Help us spread the love!!!

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
www.gigisplayhouse.com

Now with two locations!

Helping people without even knowing it!

That means you guys! A big thank you to everyone reading this newsletter. You may not know it, but you are helping people every day without even realizing it! New families and expectant parents visit the Playhouse all the time and feel **HOPE** by simply seeing pictures of all of your beautiful kids and the people that support them. At a time in their lives when they are being bombarded with negatives they can come to the Playhouse and see all the positives.



These 3 baby girls made fast friends at the Thursday playgroup! (Their mommy's did too!!)

We are doing this together, as a team, and I thought you all should know how much your presence has helped so many people. We had another expectant mother in just last week. She came in with her husband, and 2 year old son. They had just received the news that their unborn child had Down syndrome. The reaction from some of her doctors had her petrified! She was a nurse (which scared her even more) and still knew nothing about what this child would do to her life. (Down syndrome was strictly text book to her).

After visiting the Playhouse she said she felt Easter had come early. She was resurrected! She saw the potential in kids with DS and couldn't believe how active the toddlers with Down syndrome were at the Playhouse that day. She wiped away the tears and left with a smile that day. As we all know, there will be more tears, but many of them will not be from fear or sadness but from sheer joy and pride. Thank you to everyone of you!!

We had visitors from as far away as Australia!

We had an on-line chat room pick GiGi's Playhouse as their meeting place! They had families from as far away as Austrailia!! Here is one mom's email about her experience:

"I wish I could properly convey to you, the range of emotions I experienced as I walked into gigi's....I can't...I swear, my eyes are beginning to tear, as I think of it. We live in a small town in rural, southern, Missouri, and my Molly Kate, is one of a handful of 'enhanced' children down here. There is no support, there are no others, she is, uhm...an 'odddity' at best. That's why I got so involved online, (DS support chat room) with these other mothers.

Some of them even OLD like me! (we can share the experience of toddlers, diapers, as well as the headaches of college siblings!!)...and the opportunity to meet one from Australia, was a MIRACLE in my book! To have a place to be....like yours, just blew me away...someplace, that was not someone's home...where the kids could run and play and pull all the books down, without even a raised eyebrow???? I never dreamed it possible! .I watched as one of our children, who is doubly enhanced with DS AND autism...FLY around that place...touching, smiling, being SO busy...and LOVING every second of it...and was just totally blown away. THANK YOU.. THANK YOU... THANK YOU...not just for our day....but for what you do! You never know, you may have 'franchises' popping up all over the country now" WOW! What a great email!! See, you did it again!



GiGi's Playhouse
May, 2006

Participate in a study to help researchers learn more about Down syndrome!

The more we cooperate with these studies the more they will do! Dr. Susan Daley, a pediatric ER physician from Children's Memorial Hospital and mother to 8 year old Kathleen with Down syndrome, will be conducting a study on individuals with Down syndrome. She needs to collect urine samples from both children with Down syndrome and their siblings.

Your child's participation in the study may help them to better understand some of the abnormalities in the metabolism in Down syndrome and help understand some of the more debilitating aspects of this syndrome. There is no risk and no cost and all individuals will remain confidential.

She will be collecting these samples:

Saturday, May 20
Anytime between 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
at GiGi's Playhouse.

If you are interested in helping out with the study please call the Playhouse to RSVP and get more information.

To read more about the study, a full proposal is available. Please e-mail Gayle Gianopulos at gavlegio@yahoo.com



Look inside for more pictures!

Easter egg hunts, parades and more!



The big kids had their hunt in the park while the little guys had a special balloon filled room for their eggs! We took pictures with the bunny, decorated cookies and had a great time!



5K training going strong!!!

Participants young and old, rain or shine, early or late, devoted runners are working hard!! Imagine how proud they'll feel when they run the 5k for the first time!! It is never too late to start! If you are interested contact the Playhouse!!!

New Programs!!

Both tumbling and cheerleading started this month! If you missed sign up or are still interested call the Playhouse! Also the new Hop, Skip and Jumpers (ages 3-5) begins this month on the second Saturday of the month (May 13th) from 11-12:30! FUN, FUN, FUN!

Raising awareness through the streets of Elmhurst

We would like to extend a HUGE "thank you" to the many families who walked with our float in the Elmhurst St. Patrick's Day Parade! We had families from both Playhouses spreading Down syndrome awareness and enjoying the day!



A special "thank you" goes to Sharon, Laura, Dave, Dan, Shelly, Tom and West & Sons Towing, Inc.

Please contact Laura May if you would like to be on the Hoffman Estates 4th of July parade committee which will begin planning in late May. E-mail her at mayfamily00@sbcglobal.net or call the Playhouse!

Our own Christine Maxwell is doing the 5 k training!! This year she is going to be running to that finish line and getting a high five instead of giving them!!! You go GIRL!! We couldn't be more proud. Remember, there is one on one training for any individual to train for the walk or run! Call for details!!



"Be a part of the best finish line in town!"

Mid-America Tile Presents
The 3rd Annual GiGi's Playhouse
Down Syndrome Awareness
5k Fun Run/1 Mile Walk
Sunday June 11, 2006 @ 9 AM
Busse Woods, Elk Grove Village



All proceeds benefit the GiGi's Playhouse Free "Learn to Read" Literacy Program.

★ ★ ★
Registration forms are available online! You also have the option of getting pledges this year!!

This will not only raise funds but help spread more DS awareness!!!!

Don't forget Mother's Day!

Check out the new "21" on the GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Awareness Bracelets!



We also offer Down syndrome awareness necklaces (that are beautiful!) and anklets too!! Children's sizes are also available. Check them out at www.gigisplayhouse.com

or call the Playhouse and place your order for Mother's Day or as an end of the school year gift for teachers, aides, therapist etc...

Give them a gift they will love and help spread some Down syndrome awareness!!

We have had some incredible stories of how people's lives have been touched by the bracelets.

Here is one mom's story.

A woman ordered a bracelet in honor of her son who had passed away some 40+ years ago. Back then people didn't talk about disabilities. She is so happy and proud to finally be able to talk freely about her child with Down syndrome whenever someone comments on her beautiful bracelet..

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

We will be hosting a
TOWN HALL MEETING
Sunday April 30th
at 4:00 p.m.

Pizza and refreshments will be served. We are looking for anyone wanting to get involved with GiGi's Playhouse!

Bring all your friends and family that said they want to help. We are going to have opportunities for everyone:

from working with the kids
to decorating the playhouse
to volunteering for the 5K
to planning a gala for GiGi's Playhouse
and everything in between.
Bring your own ideas as well!

We want to hear from you and we want to help make GiGi's Playhouse your playhouse too!!

Please come to hear more about it.
We would love to see you there!

Playhouse News!

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GiGi's Playhouse too
 Plainfield, IL 630-778-PLAY

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Our Hoffman Estates location is 3 miles west of Woodfield in the Brandess Center next to Schaumburg Toyota.

Out of towners!



Nathan came all the way from Ohio for the Easter Egg Hunt!! We also had Grace from Wisconsin who participated in the morning hunt with the 2 and under group!!

They are back for an ENCORE!!!

Center Stage Performing Troupe is coming to Gigi's Playhouse on: **Saturday May 6 from 2:00 - 4:00**

One of the groups in the troupe includes a group made up of seven dancers with Down syndrome.

Please come and give them your support!! The dancers will perform a 15 minute show and then a dance party for everyone will follow!!!

We will make sundaes to help celebrate the day! Please join us for food, fun, and dancing!

The GiGi's Playhouse FREE "Learn to Read" literacy program

It is never too early to start thinking about your plans for the summer! If you are not currently enrolled in our literacy program, but would like summer tutoring, please contact GiGi's Playhouse as soon as possible. We will design some fun programs based on the ages of all who are interested.



Congratulations to Jenifer Vargas! She read the names of all her classmates in school by herself in front of the whole class!

Calling all moms: You deserve some pampering!

Pre-Mother's Day **"Pamper Mom" Open House**

Sunday, May 7th from 10am to 1pm at **GiGi's Playhouse**
 Join us to sample aroma therapy items, try a facial mask, get a "tune-up" seated massage, get advice from a professional make up artist. Enjoy snacks and beverages and much more!!

Hosted by Arbonne Consultants Amy Dietrich Hernandez and Jill May, both moms of children with special needs.

For more information please call **Amy** at **847.494.6654** or send an e-mail to: abcdehernandez@aol.com

Address label

Gather your friends and family and help us raise some Down syndrome awareness!!
 Sunday June, 11th at 9:00 am! It's the GiGi's Playhouse 3rd Annual Down Syndrome Awareness 5K Fun Run 1 Mile Walk!

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