



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
www.gigisplayhouse.org

GIGI'S NEWS

Serving 2 locations

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

Hoffman Estates

1069 W Golf Rd • Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
847-885-PLAY • www.gigisplayhouse.org

Plainfield

10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D • Plainfield, IL 60585
630-778-PLAY • www.gigisplayhousetoo.com

OCTOBER 2007

Each Picture Has a Story...

The 2008 Calendars feature 45 children with Down syndrome. Each face you see has a story behind it. Here is the birth story of one calendar model...

2 years ago I became pregnant. Nine months later, the doctors placed Hannah in my arms and she was one of the most beautiful things I had ever seen. The doctor checked her out in the other room and came back 15 minutes later to tell us he thought she had Down syndrome. They said the tests would take 7 full days. Our world was turned upside down! When the results came back I was by myself. I cried for fear of what my baby would have to go through. I cried out of fear for her health. I cried out of fear of what others would think. Our families were very supportive but they didn't know what to expect. Our Support family came over and gave us lots of information. They told us about GiGi's. A friend from work and a friend from Florida also told me about GiGi's Playhouse. I decided to send an email into the site. The same day I received an e-mail from Nancy. I remember crying because she was the first person



to congratulate me after knowing my daughter had Down syndrome. I went into the Playhouse to visit Open Play when Hannah was just weeks old. I was greeted as if everyone there had known me all my life. It was as if I had found my long lost family. I still cry when I think of that day. That day many of my fears were washed away. I saw children running, laughing, reading and just being kids. I had brought my older children with and it was a good thing for them to see also. We know we have our challenges but Hannah is healthy and we have a great support system. Now my children write reports in school about Down syndrome. John, my 11 year old explains to the kids in his class that Hannah has an extra chromosome.

My 15 year old daughter invites friends to come to the 2 & Under play group to help with the kids. Hannah



has taught us all to appreciate the little things in life and not to take anything for granted. She has taught us to be advocates for her and to help others overcome their fears. When we look at Hannah we don't see Down syndrome, just our wonderful baby girl. She will help educate everyone that comes into contact with her on just how wonderful and rich her life will be!

GiGiFest2007!!

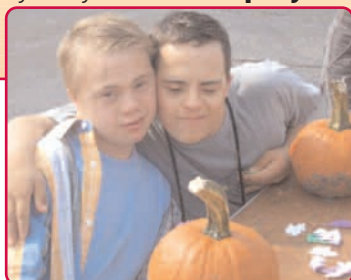
Celebrate Our 4th Anniversary Bash with Us!

Please come out and bring your family and friends to this incredible party!! We have people coming in from across the country to celebrate with us so lets show them how strong our Down syndrome community really is! **We have pony rides, pumpkin decoration, Ronald McDonald,**

food and lots of fun!! Meet our calendar models, win a raffle prize, and be amazed at how much strength and hope is in this crowd! *See you there.*

Our Mission:

To increase awareness of Down syndrome by providing, programming, support and education.



attend

**OCTOBER 14
12NOON-3PM
Hoffman
Estates
location**

HOPEMANESHALES LOCATION

Girls Pajama Party

Attention 6, 7, & 8 year old girls. Come on Friday, October 19th in your favorite PJ's for a fun filled girls night! The fun will include: jewelry making, snacks, manicures and we'll end with a movie!!!! Drop off at 6:30 pick up the girls at 9pm, sisters welcome. Please RSVP to the playhouse by October 12th so we can be sure to have plenty of supplies. Boys look for your PJ party in November.

Hop, Skip & Jumpers

Our 3-5 year old group had a great month! Crafts, a puppet show, creative play...we sure used our imagination this month! Call the

Playhouse to register for this interactive group!



Open Play

What a crowd!



Open Play has had a busy summer! We love to see so many new faces each week! Join us every Thursday from 12:30-2pm for pizza, fun and networking. *Everyone welcome!*

Halloween Party Saturday, October 27th from 12noon-2pm! Don't forget your costumes! *Everyone's invited!!*



Camp GiGi Was a Great Week!

Once again, camp counselor George hosted a week of fun games and activities for the kids. Each day the kids had a new activity followed by story time then always ended the day with ice cream! One of our campers had never been to the playhouse before and left with new friends and good memories. Thanks for a great week George and Krysta!



FridayFriends Was Rockin



This month the FridayFriends did their all time favorite pastime – KAROKE! We had 2 new friends join us, brother and sister, Laura and Dan! We sang, danced, laughed, and ended the night with a sing along lead by Rick. Look for more jam sessions in the future! The group had a proper send off for Marc, snacking on Chinese noodles and cake, in preparation for his departure to China for the Special Olympics.

Next month come dressed as your favorite movie star!

Hoffman Estates CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 Literacy 4-7pm 	3 Literacy 6-8pm Special Intentions 7pm 	4 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome Literacy 6-8pm 	5 Literacy 10am-2pm 	6
7	8 Literacy 12noon-2pm 	9 Literacy 4-7pm 	10 Literacy 6-8pm 	11 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome Literacy 6-8pm 	12 Literacy 10am-2pm 	13 Crawlers 9-9:45am 2&Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12noon-1:30pm
14 GIGIFEST 12noon-3pm 	15	16 Literacy 4-7pm 	17 Literacy 6-8pm 	18 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome Literacy 6-8pm 	19 Literacy 10am-2pm Girl's P.J. Party 6:30-9pm 	20 Walkers 9-9:45am Leaps & Bounds 10-11:30am
21	22 Literacy 12noon-2pm Board Meeting 7pm 	23 Literacy 4-7pm 	24 Literacy 6-8pm 	25 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome Literacy 6-8pm 	26 Literacy 10am-2pm 	27 Halloween Party!! 12noon-2pm Literacy 4-6pm 
28 Polish Group 11-1pm	29	30 Literacy 4-7pm 	31 Halloween Literacy Nite 6:30pm Everyone welcome 	OCTOBER		

Don't Forget: Don't forget your Costumes!!
Halloween Party! October 27th, 12noon-2pm! See you there!

Open Play: Every Thursday!
Everyone is welcome! Stop by for pizza, pop and fun! We have volunteers to assist with the kids so the parents can hang out! It's awesome!

Literacy Program: GiGi's Playhouse provides FREE private tutoring to children with Down syndrome. Customized materials are provided for each individual student. The program also assists teachers and parents on how to tutor their children.

Friday Friends: Ages 18 and up only. Party with the gang! Equal numbers of peers with Down syndrome as without. Karaoke, dances, laser tag, bowling, prom, movie nights, friends and fun!

2 and under group: Families with kids 2 and under get together to play, and have fun while the parents network with each other!

Hop, Skip and Jumpers: For 3-5 year olds, this program will help promote friendships, good social skills and interactive play through fun creative activities!

Hispanic Group: Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education.

Polish Play Group: Polish speaking families gather for an afternoon of fun and friendship.

Reserved: Playhouse may be reserved for private play groups, parties or support groups

GiGi's Crawlers: This group focuses on crawling skills as well as fine motor skills, social interaction with peers in a semi-structured environment. Children need to be crawling and are accompanied by a parent/adult.

GiGi's Walkers: This group focuses on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities (balance beam, kicking, throwing, jumping, etc.) Children need to be walking and must be accompanied by a parent/adult.

The Playhouse can be reserved for any Down syndrome related event.

When it is available it may also be used by other groups with special needs.

GiGiFest!!

October 14th, 12noon-3pm

Our 4th Anniversary Bash! This is the BIGGEST Down Syndrome Party of the year! Come and join us for fun, food, games, prizes, and so much more! Call the Playhouse for details!

Everyone's welcome at GiGi's Playhouse

Due to the need for scheduling volunteers and acquiring supplies, reservations are greatly appreciated.

Call **847-885-PLAY**
or you can e-mail nancy@gigisplayhouse.org
Feel free to leave a message!

GiGi's Playhouse is located 3 miles West of Woodfield Shopping Mall next to Schaumburg Toyota in the Hoffman Center at:
1069 W. Golf Road • Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
847-885-PLAY

PLAINFIELD LOCATION

September's Open Play!

Several Families Came Out for a Morning of Fun

Our kids and their siblings enjoyed a couple hours of shooting baskets, going down the slide, riding the little roller coaster, pretend cooking in the play kitchen, and you name it! Meanwhile, the parents utilized that time to catch up with one another



This is a nice way to take our first step into the Playhouse. It is very laid back and fun!
—as one mother put it



Upcoming Group Leaders Meeting

Group leaders, watch the newsletter for a group leaders meeting in November! Please try to make room in your schedule to attend the meeting.

New Group Leaders Wanted

Would you like to see a new playgroup at the Playhouse for your child's age? Have you been thinking of hosting a new playgroup? If so, then contact the Playhouse today at **630-778-PLAY!**

1st Playhouse Pals Meeting a Huge Success!

The new Playhouse Pals group started up in August and we had a great turnout. There were 9 children for our new group of 1st-3rd graders. If you weren't able to come to the first group we hope you can come to our next on September 22 from 1-3pm at the Playhouse in Plainfield. We plan to have fun with music in September and we will learn about safety on October 20 from 1-3pm. If you need more information call Lori at **630.375.1765**.

2007 DS Support Buddy Walk

Register today for the Buddy Walk on Sunday, October 7th at Ty Warner Park in Westmont, IL.

Visit www.dssupport.net/buddywalk/ for information and to register.

Board of Directors

Doug Collie, President
colliedoug@yahoo.com

Ross Goodfellow
ross_goodfellow@yahoo.com

Wendy Eurich
weurich@comcast.net

Brendan Conley
jbc@macleanpower.com

Tom Benco
tmbenco@yahoo.com

Genia Latka
geniaanddan@comcast.net

Michele Ptaszek
mdp1116@aol.com

Contact Information:

Co-Directors, Beth Sullivan and Mike Apgar
apgarfamily@sbcglobal.net




















Reading Tutors Needed

GiGi's Free Literacy Program is looking for additional tutors. This is a fantastic opportunity for teachers, student teachers, and therapists to get involved and work with our wonderful children! For more information, contact the Playhouse at **630-778-PLAY**.

Dress Up Day Coming in November

Dress up day is a special time for 'twins' to get together for an afternoon of make-up and facepainting, dress up, and snacks. Ages 8+. More info coming soon!

Plainfield CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	2 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	3	4	5 Teen-Tastic 7-9pm 	6 2 & Under 9:30-11am Literacy Program 10-11:30am
7 Buddy Walk Ty Warner Park Westmont, IL 	8 Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i> 	9 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> Board of Directors Meeting 7pm 	10	11	12 Open Play 10am-Noon 	13 Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm Pre-Walkers 9-10am Walkers 10-11am <i>RSVP to 630-423-4035</i>
14 GIGIFEST 12noon-3pm 	15 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	16 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	17	18	19 Signing Time 10-11am 	20 Literacy Program 10-11:30am Playhouse Pals 1-3pm 
21	22 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	23 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	24	25	26	27 Pre-Crawlers 9-10am Crawlers 10-11am <i>RSVP to Judy 630-961-2430</i>
28 Nuetro Angeles 11am-1pm <i>Hispanic Playgroup</i> 	29 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	30 Literacy Program 3-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	31 <i>Halloween</i> 	OCTOBER		

All Events are Free unless noted.

*RSVP to 630-778-PLAY

Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome.

Buddy Walk!! Join us for the 5th Annual Chicagoland Buddy Walk on October 7th!

2 & under playgroup: Families with children 2 and under get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

3-4 year old playgroup: Families with children ages 3-4 get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

Pre-crawlers/Crawlers: This group focuses on crawling skills as well as fine motor skills, social interaction with peers in a semi-structured environment. Pre-crawlers is for children who are just starting to crawl and the Crawlers is for children who are crawling on all fours. Children must be accompanied by a parent/adult.

Pre-walkers/Walkers: This group focuses on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities (balance beam, kicking, throwing, jumping, etc.) The pre-walkers is for children who

are just starting to walk independently and the Walkers group is for children who are walking independently. Children must be accompanied by a parent/adult.

Teen-Tastic: This group meets from 7-9pm. We order pizza for dinner and have lots of fun watching movies and playing games with each other. 6th-12th grades.

Hispanic Group: Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education.

Signing Time Group: Learn sign language by signing along to the songs from the TV series. All ages are welcome.

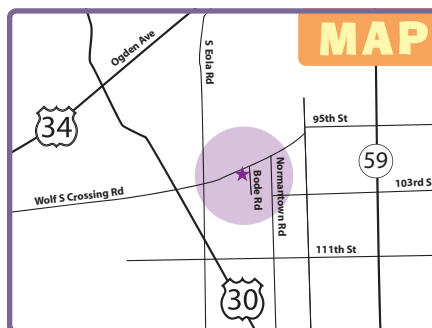
Daddy and Me: Dads get out with the kids and get together with other dads. All ages.

Open Play: Open to everyone.

Playhouse Pals: For families with children in 1st-3rd grades.

Birthday Party: All ages.

Come to GiGiFest on October 14th at the Hoffman Estates location! See you there!



10052 S. Bode Road
Unit D
Plainfield, IL 60585

630-778-PLAY (7529)
fax 630-778-7519

gigisplayhousetoo.com

Celebrating Down Syndrome Awareness Month

It's Only Down Syndrome...

Sarah is our first child. I can still remember the absolute amazement, joy and complete excitement when we learned we were expecting. I can also remember the absolute fear, sadness and uncertainty upon learning that our baby would have Down syndrome and need open heart surgery. However, I truly believe that I was meant to know of her diagnosis so I could one day help other moms with theirs. We found out on a Thursday evening — I'll never forget the moment. We spent a week-end in agony — will we ever be able to vacation again, will she survive, we'll never be able to get a babysitter and have a date, and on and on. I would like to tell you that acceptance was easy, but it was not, it was painful and hard. However, when playing the "why me" card, I had a wise friend say, "Why not you? God knew that your marriage was strong enough to survive this, your faith strong enough not to abort the baby and



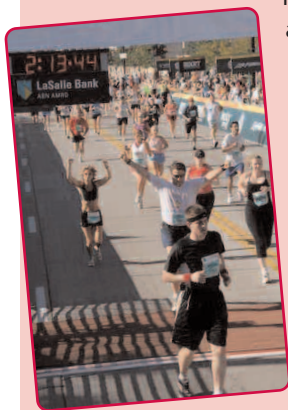
your friends and family strong enough to support you in every way." I will never, ever forget those words. I never looked back after that! Sarah's birth was the most joyous occasion I could ever have imagined. We had been told to expect her to come out blue and be whisked away from us, to prepare not even to hold her. Well, no way was she going to live down to this expectation. She came out pink, screaming and yelling. We held her forever and took a million pictures and she sucked down her first bottle like no one could believe. She has been going strong ever since. After my experience, I decided to become a Parent Liaison for NADS and I helped other women with their in utero diagnosis. I remember telling them that though they don't believe it now, they will one day say and believe, "Oh, it's only Down syndrome" and I can say with complete honesty, that that is what I think every day. Sarah is a blessing I could never have imagined and I can't imagine my life without her. The amazing journey we are on was and is worth every ounce of pain we felt when we got our diagnosis and just didn't know that it truly is 'only Down syndrome'.

Read our other Calendar Parent Stories on the website at www.gigisplayhouse.org or to purchase the 2008 calendar, go to www.gigisplayhouse.org or call 847.885.7529.

Run for Health!

Dr. Brian Chicoine, of the Adult Down Syndrome Center in Park Ridge, is off and running once again! This will be his 4th time running the Chicago Marathon which takes place on October 7, 2007. Not only is he running to raise funds

for the Center and promote health and fitness to his patients, but he has also created the Adult Down Syndrome Center Fitness Team and is asking his patients, family members, staff and all of us to join him in his efforts! If you want to get involved, either to cheer them on, support financially, or run alongside the team, call the Center at **847.318.2303**, for more information. Thank you Dr. Chicoine and the ADSC for your outstanding efforts and dedication!!



Spreading Awareness Throughout Chicago

The PubCrawl, the Chicago Playhouse's 1st fundraiser, was a huge success!! As the sold-out crowd walked from venue to venue, their t-shirts spread awareness and started conversations that left lasting impressions! Thanks Heidi and the Chicago team, for working so hard and bringing the magic of the Playhouse to the city!



For more information, contact chicago@gigisplayhouse.org.

Are You Expecting a Baby with Down Syndrome?

Then let us be the first to say **CONGRATULATIONS!** Did you know that GiGi's not only supports families after they have a child with Down syndrome, but we also provide support for dealing with the initial diagnosis! It is important (especially during Down Syndrome Awareness month!) for parents to be aware that there is support out there. It can be a scary time and many parents struggle with how to deal with the accompanying emotions.



If you or someone you know is dealing with the emotions and decisions that come after receiving the diagnosis, please reach out to get support — you aren't alone! Please call the Playhouse for help on finding resources near you.

Do you want to help parents dealing with the diagnosis in-utero? Email info@gigisplayhouse.org for more information on our Positive Beginnings program.

Celebrating Down Syndrome Awareness Month

Top 10 IDEAS to Spread Awareness

Show the world how proud you are of your child with Down Syndrome!

1 Medical Community

Give calendars, brochures, bookmarks to your medical community! Hospitals, therapists, doctors offices...even dentists!



2 Books

Donate to your child's school or local library. Copies may be available at Ups for Downs or purchase them from www.amazon.com "We'll Paint the Octopus Red", "My Friend Isabelle", "The Best Worst Brother" and for siblings "Views From Your Shoes" and "The Sibling Slam Book" are some examples.

3 Email Blast

Send an email to everyone educating people about DS, your personal story, and some pictures. Include an email to your school district teachers/principals by going to your district website to secure email addresses.

4 Visit your Child's Class

ask the teacher if you can read a story about DS to the class and then pass out the custom made Activity Booklets with your child's picture in it.

5 Get Involved!

Volunteer at GiGi's Playhouse and/or attend one of the numerous Down syndrome events including the DS Support Buddy Walk, Ups for Downs events, NADS conference etc.



6 Calendars

Promote/sell/donate the GiGi's Playhouse 2008 Down Syndrome Awareness Calendar! If you would like to volunteer to sell calendars, contact Jeanette at vibby3@comcast.net to find out about opportunities.



7 GiGi's Store

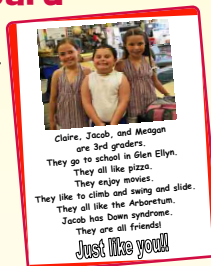
Note cards, tees, onsies, bibs, hats, and more! Call the Playhouse to order yours today and give as gifts to teachers and therapists with a 'Thank You' notecard for working with your child!

8 Awareness Jewelry

Wear your Down Syndrome Awareness bracelets and necklaces. If you don't already own one, visit www.gigisplayhouse.org

9 Bulletin Board

Create one in your child's school or a sibling's school entitled "Just Like You" with pictures of your child interacting with friends, family, classmates, scouts etc.



10 Write

Write a letter to you child or journal entry reminding yourself exactly where you are in your life right now with your child. Whether it's how far you've come or how far you hope to go, many of us forget to sit down, reflect and enjoy the moment. Ask relatives to write about how your child has changed their life and SAVE these for your child. (You could also submit them to the Playhouse to be used for various awareness projects, calendar, newsletter, etc...or submit them to your local support group).

Back To School

Is it time for the 'Down syndrome talk'? Want to introduce your child to the class? Want to send something home to parents that is easy to read and fun for the kids?

The GiGi's Playhouse activity book is the perfect item and it can be customized with your child's picture and information! The activity book is perfect for school-aged children; It has a coloring page, a crossword puzzle, a word unscramble (Kids with Down syndrome make good friends) a word search, a poster page (your child's picture and info) and a "For the parents" DS information page. It is a really great teaching tool!

We always have them on hand at the Playhouse or you could have them custom made with your child's picture and information. We make these free of charge at the playhouse. They can also be made into posters.

We like to distribute these at various pediatric offices and hospitals for use in their waiting rooms. Kids will have fun and learn a positive message! Call the playhouse to pick up these activity books to distribute or email jenni@gigisplayhouse.org for a custom printed book!



This is Sophia and Mira
Sophia is Mira's little sister.
Sophia has Down syndrome.
They both go to school.
They both laugh a lot.
They both like to go bowling.
They both like ice cream.
They both love having fun!

Just like you!



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

K	E	N	D	S		S	M	L		
N	E	C								
L	O	V	E							
P	W	S	G	R	N	M	J	E		
O	K	H	F	S	I	O	S	U	V	
L	H	A	G	R	C	S	R	S	O	
I	A	R	C	E	E	Y	N	D	L	
T	W	E	S	N	V	R	Y	N	P	
E	F	K	D	N	K	E	Z	E	S	
O	V	N	B	A	J	R	A	I	G	
F	I	G	L	M	K	A	W	R	U	
K	S	M	I	E	L	E	C	T	F	H

Treat others the way you would like to be treated!!



1069 W Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SCHAUMBURG, IL
PERMIT NO. 93

GiGiFest

Don't Miss the Party!
Sunday, October 14th, 12noon-3pm!!
The Biggest Down Syndrome
Awareness Party of the Year!



Fall Reading Begins!

We have started the Fall literacy program and it is going great! We have lots of group sessions which teaches turn taking, develops friendships, and promotes speech! We also have individual and consulting sessions! You can join us to make books the last Wednesday of every month and bring some books home to work on with your child! Call the Playhouse to get on the waiting list!! Do you have

experience teaching and want to be a tutor?

Call the Playhouse for more information!



"I was brought to tears when I first came to the Literacy program. Not only did my daughter learn reading skills, I was provided with a wealth of information that would benefit me and my family!"

—as one mother says

2008 Calendars Have Arrived

These award-winning calendars are filled with messages of hope, inspiration and, of course, awareness! Check out our new pocket calendar—limited quantities!!

Call the Playhouse or go online to order your 2008 award winning calendar!



Save these Dates

October 7th ■ **DS Support Buddy Walk**
in Westmont, IL

October 14th ■ **GiGiFest**

October 27th ■ **Halloween Party**
Hoffman Estates location