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GIGI'S NEWS

Serving two 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
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June 2007

Want to be a part of the GiGi's Playhouse opening in Chicago?
Contact Heidi at
chicago@gigisplayhouse.org

Go Team Samantha!

Deb Mirabelli decided to get a group of 25 runners/walkers together in her daughter's name and thus Team Samantha was created. Their goal was to raise \$1000 but they have been so successful that they have raised their goal to \$5000!! Deb emailed her address list asking for participants and/or donors. She didn't want anyone to have to pay to participate so she created a pledge sheet for each person – including her other children! She also sent out a flyer to her Christmas list! In 1 week they raised over \$500! Her son is collecting spare change from everywhere – the floor, from his teachers, even from the bottom of mom's purse! Deb's friend's school has chosen Team Samantha as their recipient for Dress Down Day. Each child that participates can choose not to wear their uniform to school and donate \$1.00. They expect to raise \$500 just from that! "To see



the outreach of people is so amazing. Half of them have never even met Samantha and yet their generosity is overwhelming." We are rooting for you Team Samantha! Use these tips to create your own team! Visit www.gigisplayhouse.org to get your team page started!

save the date

Book Fair **July 26th-29th!**
And Ice Cream Social **July 29th!!** Both events will take place at GiGi's Playhouse in Hoffman Estates.



Bookkeeper needed at both Hoffman Estates and Plainfield locations!
Call **847-885-7529** (HE) or **630-778-7529** (PL).

Moved recently?
Call or email us to update your contact information!!

Who knew a 6 inch stage could be your platform to the world!

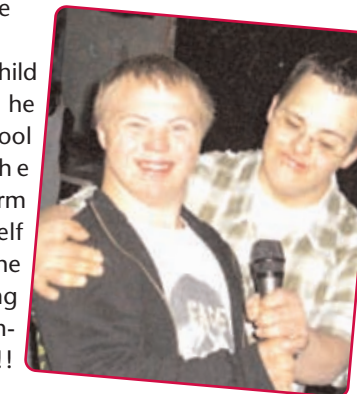
...a volunteer hangs black panels (to hide all the toys) turns on the disco ball and black lights, turns off the lights and transforms GiGi's Playhouse into Club GiGi's for Open Mic Night for the teens. She thought, 'Is it really worth all that work for 2 hours of



fun?' Then she saw the look of accomplishment on one boys' face when he sang for the first time on stage! He had quietly watched from afar every month, quietly building up the courage to let it rip on stage! (each month a new kid is stepping up!) ...One Mom told us "the whole drive here I think, 'why do I drive so far to come here?' Then when I walk in the door and see what he becomes when he is here...I remember why. He is a star, he is a leader and the smile never leaves his face"



...another Mom said "I see the child he is when he is here and I pray he will take that with him to school someday. I am hoping the Playhouse will serve as a platform for him to take the pride, self esteem and leadership qualities he has when he is here and bring them to school and into the community with him". WOW!! We couldn't have said it better!



Did you know you can raise money for GiGi's Playhouse just by searching the internet? www.Goodsearch.com is a yahoo powered search engine that donates 1 cent to GiGi's Playhouse every time you use it! Make Good Search your search engine today!



This months newsletter is dedicated to baby Samuel Romie who was born premature and passed away at just over 2 months. His family called the Playhouse for tribute envelopes and the outpouring of love we have seen from Samuel's family and friends has been amazing! Thank you, Sam, for continuing to spread Down syndrome awareness through your life!

Making a difference

Recently when a new Mom came to the Playhouse we asked how she heard about us and she said "From EVERYONE – starting with the hospitals, to my neighbors and friends." Together we can all make a difference! Here is one nurse's story:

There are not too many times when you can be sure that you touched someone's life and made it better. As an RN in the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), I am often surrounded by concerned and overwhelmed parents. Recently, I was given the opportunity to care for a newborn baby girl with Down syndrome, Sarah. When caring for a new baby, you are also caring for the family. Sarah was two days old when I first began caring for her. I called her mother and asked her if she would like to come and feed Sarah. When mom came to the NICU, she was obviously overwhelmed with all of the information being given to her about her new baby. I asked her if she had been told about GiGi's Playhouse. She said that she was given some handouts and websites to look over but had never heard of GiGi's. I gave her the Celebration Packet that we keep on hand at the NICU for moments like these. The next day, when Sarah's mom came to the NICU, she was smiling and thanked me for giving her the information about GiGi's. She said that the Playhouse seemed like it would be a great place for her family in the future.



Baby Franco's 1st visit to the Playhouse

This is just one example of the many times I have been able to present new parents with positive information about their newborn with Down syndrome. The relief I see on the faces of the new moms and dads is amazing. Their whole disposition changes when they hear 'congratulations' and receive the GiGi's Celebration packet. So thank you, GiGi's, for supplying us with these Celebration packets to give to our new parents. It changes their whole outlook and quite possibly, the lives of them and their new baby.

— Christine Pykett, RN

HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

Camp GiGi with George is Back!

Once again this summer we will be offering a one week summer camp for kids ages 6-10. Each day will have a new theme and we promise the kids will have FUN!

Camp will be August 6-10th from 10 - 11:30am. Please call the Playhouse to register or volunteer – we will need 2 adults and 2 teens to help out.



Attention Walkers!

This session of the Walkers group will be ending this month. There will be a new class starting in July. The Walkers meet on the 3rd Saturday of each month for 5 consecutive months. Space is limited!!! Registration required and you must be able to commit to all 5 classes. Call the Playhouse for more details.

New Baby Signs Class!!!

Research has shown that the use of sign language with children at an early age will jump start speech and language development. We are very excited to offer a 3 week introductory Baby Sign Class. The Class will be taught by Liz Gordon, M.S. Independent Certified Instructor. Each week will have a new theme: Mealtime, Bedtime, Bath Time, etc. The stimulating activities, songs, play, and information introduced will all support learning and signs. It will be held on 3 consecutive Wednesday mornings at 9am; July 11th, 18th, and 25th. You must be able to commit to all classes in order to enroll. Class is 45 minutes long and targeted for kids ages 6-30 months. Class is limited to 8 children and may be offered again in the fall. Take home materials will be provided. Call the Playhouse to register.

Crawlers Class has an opening

We have space for 2 more kids in the Crawlers class. Cathy our PT, with help from Sue our volunteer give great individual instruction while keeping the rest of the class moving – literally! Last month we set up an obstacle course – the kids did great! Call the playhouse to register, the group meets the 2nd Saturday of the month at 9am.

We are so grateful for the Crawlers class. At the first session Hannah was not too thrilled with getting on her hands

and knees. At the second class she was getting on her hands and knees and rocking back and forth. Last night we had her in the wheel barrel position and she walked on her hands around the room over and over. That was something she would not even attempt at the first session.



Come to Open Play

Every Thursday from 12:30-2pm. Volunteers needed for summer! Call **847-885-7529** if interested.



Interested in having your child perform? Join the Leaps and Bounds class!



save the date

Come Tailgate with our Friday Friends on **June 22nd** from 7-9pm. Open to adults with and without Down syndrome ages 18+. *RSVP required.*



Hop, Skip and Jumpers

My son Jack and I attended Hop, Skip and Jumpers last Saturday — it is Jack's favorite!!! As we were sitting around singing our name song it brought me back to when I found out we were having a child with Down syndrome and all the fears and concerns I had. Looking back, I remember my main fear was whether my child would have friends and be accepted. As we sang, danced and planted our flowers for the upcoming summer, I realized these children are my child's friends. They are forming lasting friendships and are going to be a part of my child's life for years to come. By developing friendships at the Playhouse, Jack is able to use those social skills out in the community. I hope Jack knows how lucky he is to have such wonderful kids to call his FRIENDS!!!



"Making friends while practicing OT!"

YOU ARE THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

Thanks DS Support!!

GiGi's extends heartfelt thanks to Jen Paganessi and DS Support for their generous donation of \$11,250 to BOTH GiGi's Hoffman and GiGi's Plainfield. Through Jen and her committee's hard work and dedication, together we can continue our mission of raising awareness and celebrating the lives of our loved ones with Down syndrome.



Thank You Brownies

One of our favorite things to see here at GiGi's is kids helping kids! That is exactly what the 1st Grade Brownie Troop at Collins school decided to do after being introduced to GiGi's Playhouse by one of their peers and fellow Brownie member, Heather Andress. Together, they decided to donate a portion of their profits from selling Girl Scout cookies to GiGi's! The girls came to visit the Playhouse and present a check of \$160! They learned what activities are offered at that Playhouse and saw that kids with Down syndrome like to do the same things that they do! Thanks so much to the 1st Grade Brownie Troop at Collins School!



"Keeping the toys clean is an important job!"



Many students of Harper college fulfill their required observation hours at GiGi's. We love having

them come to GiGi's because it spreads awareness and many of the students end up volunteering even after their hours have been fulfilled! We had one student come to every Open Play for her observation hours. After they were over, she came back several weeks later stating that she missed coming here every week! She's now a regular volunteer!

I originally came to GiGi's Playhouse to complete observation hours for a child disabilities class I was taking at Harper College. My first few weeks at GiGi's I observed students in the literacy program, but before long found myself very involved with helping children to read. Shortly there after I was invited to be a tutor and I jumped at the chance because I discovered how

immensely enjoyable working in the literacy program was and I felt I could be an effective tutor with the training I received at the Playhouse and a little patience on the part of both the parents and



students. I'm thrilled that a class requirement led me to discover an incredible volunteer opportunity with students who consistently, week after week, bring a smile to my face.



My world has been changed for the better by my involvement here and my children have been touched by it too. My daughter, Jill, volunteers with me every month and wouldn't miss it for the world. She has fallen in love with the spirit and joy of our class members and sings their praises wherever she goes. My son, Sam, is always disappointed when soccer games interfere with our class. So thank you, thank you, thank you for the gift of your children and your time.



I leave here with a good feeling in my heart.

— Andi Bernstein, Open play Host



Friday Friends

Four years ago, my 15 yr old son created Friday Friends with the inspiration from Jack, his cousin with Down syndrome. It has been an honor for me to be a part of this. I am most proud of the volunteers. To watch them grow and bloom has been such an unexpected reward. When they first started volunteering, we encouraged them along. Now, they walk in knowing they won't be judged and they just have fun! To see them dance, sing and joke around with everyone is truly amazing.

Maybe it's just the picture windows or maybe it's more. Maybe it's the combined hopes and dreams shining from within this place. This place is a home. It has a family just like any other family. Everyone pitches in to make the Playhouse all that it can be and everyone enjoys the fruits of those efforts. I think I feel it more so now since I have interned here and worked behind the scenes to make this place amazing. It's one of those things you have to experience for yourself. The best way I can put it is that GiGi's Playhouse becomes a part of you and you in turn a part of it.



THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

We couldn't do it without YOU!

Want to make a difference and you just don't know how? GiGi's is in need of your time or your talent. Volunteer opportunities include anything from cleaning toys to administrative work to organizing to helping with the 5K! There are plenty of volunteer opportunities available! If you would like to volunteer, please visit our website at www.gigisplayhouse.org to fill out an application. Want more information contact Jenni at **847-885-7529** or at Jenni@gigisplayhouse.org.



On these pages you will read about our volunteers experience and how much it has enriched their lives. We are amazed at our volunteers at the time and dedication they put in, whether it is an hour a week or an hour a month, they put their heart and soul into what they are doing for our children, they are the real heroes. We hope these pages inspire you because these people inspire me!



Only a few more weeks to register!

The 4th annual GiGi's Playhouse 5K Fun Run and Walk

is just around the corner!

Sunday June 10th, 2007

9 am Race Start Certified 5K Fun Run

1 Mile Inspirational Walk and our all new kids

"Dash for Down Syndrome"!!

Located at the beautiful Village Green

in the Prairie Stone Complex.

5336 Prairie Stone Parkway (across from the Sears Center)

Hoffman Estates

Don't forget to register by going online to:

www.gigisplayhouse.org

Questions with **Active.com** registration?

Call **888-543-7223** for customer support.

If you have been collecting pledges, please mail no later than June 1st to:

Special Events Management/GiGi's Playhouse

1960 N. Clybourn Ave, Chicago, IL 60614

All pledges must be postmarked by June 1st to be eligible for prizes.

This program raises awareness about Down syndrome by showing people that children with Down syndrome CAN and WILL learn how to read. Even if your child is not in the program, by supporting it you are helping raise awareness about the potential of kids with Down syndrome.



Books, Pizza, and Fun!

That is what our monthly Literacy Nite's consist of. The last Wednesday of each month, from 6:30-8:30pm, volunteers come together to eat pizza and make books for our literacy program. This month, we made over 150 books and many of those were able to go home with parents whose children are currently on the waiting list. This way, they can get started on reading right away! All volunteers are welcome and it is a great way for parents to give back to this free program by helping create the individualized books. Want to be on the volunteer email list? Contact Jenni at jenni@gigisplayhouse.com



Leaps and Bounds

Once a month I receive the gift of being able to volunteer at Gigi's Playhouse. I want to thank Julie Stout (Maggie's mom) for offering me the opportunity to share my love of dance with the kids at Gigi's. I teach the "Leaps and Bounds" class and have truly seen our kids grow by leaps and bounds. I'll never forget the first time I walked into the playhouse and was greeted by Nancy. I thought "this is the happiest place on earth, I don't care what Disney says!" One Saturday a month, we stretch, warm up our muscles, thank our bodies for all they can do and we dance! We've seen such growth from our first week together. Friendships have been made, routines established and much, much fun (and picture taking) has been had. Last month we learned a whole dance to "You're A Grand Old Flag" because there is no limit to what our class can do. Watch for our performance at the 5K in June... bet you'll want to join in too!

Spreading Awareness and Love through our Volunteers!

GiGi's Playhouse is run on the heart and soul of our dedicated volunteers (and sponsors!). We have well over 200 volunteers that offer their time and energy to ensuring that the Playhouse activities are running smoothly. Each of our 8 monthly weekend programs are hosted by volunteers and parents. Our literacy program is run by volunteer tutors. Not only are these scheduled programs run by volunteers, so are all of our events and Playhouse tasks! Without the consistency and passion that each of you special volunteers bring to GiGi's, we wouldn't be what we are today!

HOFFMAN ESTATES CALENDAR • JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Literacy 3-5pm 	2 Literacy 8-10am
3 Nuestros Angeles 11am-1pm	4 Private Party 5-8pm 	5 Literacy 10:30am-5:30pm 	6 Literacy 10am-2pm and 6-8pm Special Intentions Group 7pm 	7 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome! Literacy 5-7pm 	8 Literacy 3-5pm	9 Crawlers 9-9:45am 2&Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers Noon-1:30pm
10 5K Fun Run & Walk 9am	11	12 Literacy 10:30am-5:30pm 	13 Literacy 10am-2pm and 6-8pm 	14 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome! Literacy 5-7pm 	15 Literacy 3-5pm 	16 Literacy 8-10am Walkers 9-9:45am Leaps & Bounds 10-11:30am
17 Father's Day 	18	19 Literacy 10:30am-5:30pm 	20 Literacy 10am-2pm and 6-8pm 	21 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome! Literacy 5-7pm Summer Begins	22 Literacy 3-5pm Friday Friends 7-9pm 	23 Ups for Downs Luncheon
24 Polish Group 11am-1pm	25	26 Literacy 10:30am-5:30pm 	27 Literacy 10am-2pm and 6-8pm Literacy Nite 6:30-8:30pm 	28 Open Play 12:30-2pm Everyone welcome! Literacy 5-7pm 	29 Literacy 3-5pm 	30 Literacy 8-10am

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.

"Future" Friday Friends: Ages 6-8 only. Kids create lasting friendships through facilitated interactive play, while promoting good social skills. Each session ends with a pizza dinner in which social skills and table manners will be encouraged.

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.

Everyone is 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!

Check the website for constant updates

and to see pictures of the activities

www.gigisplayhouse.org

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

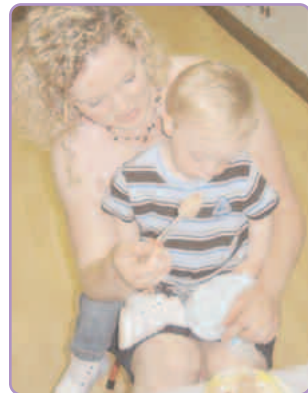
847-885-PLAY

GiGi's Too Spring Party

A fun afternoon was had by all at the GiGi's Playhouse Too Spring Party on April 29! More than a dozen families came out for an afternoon of socializing and enjoying each others company. Our families snacked on fruit and veggies, chips, ice cream, cookies and other goodies while our little ones played until they couldn't play anymore! There were arts and crafts, music and dancing, and the kids competed in a ball toss. Local high school students Andrew Sullivan and Jack Veselik ran the games



and helped keep track of the kids. Each child went home with a prize! The evening was capped off with a rousing round of bubbles from our bubble machine!



Our photographer, Lori Sullivan, took many action shots of the kids having a great time at the party. She volunteered her time and expertise. Look for some of these photos to be hung on the walls of the Playhouse in coming days. Thanks, Lori!

We had a couple of new families come out for the party. Additionally, we had a new volunteer that ran our arts and crafts station, where our kids created beautiful Spring art projects. Our newest volunteer, Lori Billinger, is getting her degree in Special Education and was thrilled to spend the afternoon getting to know our families and she cannot wait to spend more time volunteering with us. Thanks, Lori!



One Big Impact!

Brian Mikulecky, a member of the Confirmation class from St. Raphael's Church in Naperville that volunteered at our Winter Fest party on Jan. 14, was very affected by his experience with our children. Brian, a sophomore at Neuqua Valley High School, recently wrote to us to let us know how he felt about his experience. "I had a blast with all the kids that were there. I want to hang out with those same kids more often and I want to be a teenager that makes a difference. I was struck by how full of life, happy and excited all the kids were to see older people there. I believe that I can be a responsible role model and touch each child's life there in a different way. I loved being around the kids and hope to have many more memorable moments hanging out, living in the moment with every person, not just the kids, but adults and siblings too." Look for Brian volunteering at more events in the future! He'll be lending a helping hand at the 2 & Under group on the first Saturday of every month. Also, he'll be volunteering at our 2007 Golf Outing on Monday, July 30 at the Royal Hawk Country Club in St. Charles.

Volunteers Needed!

GiGi's Free Literacy Program is looking to form a volunteer committee to assist the growing needs of the program. Time commitment is minimal; most responsibilities can be done from home. Duties may include phone calls, e-mailing and organizing. This is a great opportunity to network and meet other families. COME JOIN THE FUN AND HELP OUR KIDS LEARN TO READ! Contact Melissa Cleary at **630-778-7529** or **cleary@wowway.com**

We Have Two New Tutors!

GiGi's reading program is very happy to welcome two tutors that have volunteered their precious time. Shanta Rahavan and Susie Hansen are the latest additions to the tutoring team in helping teach our kids to read. Thank you ladies, your dedication is so appreciated.

Daddy & Me

The Daddy and Me playgroup on April 14 was an exciting time for attendees to get out of the house and have some fun! The dads had a chance to socialize and network and the kids had a wonderful time playing. Daddy and Me meets on the second Saturday of the month from 3-4:30pm. Come on out to the next Daddy and Me on May 12!



FORE!!

Don't forget, the 2007 Golf Outing is scheduled for Monday, July 30th at the Royal Hawk Country Club in St. Charles. Registration forms can be found at your local GiGi's location.

Questions about registration or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Tom May at **mayfamily00@sbcglobal.net** or **630-805-2575**.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Private Play Group Noon-2pm Teen-Tastic 7-9pm	2 2 & Under 9:30-11am Literacy Program 10-11:30am 3-4pm Playgroup 11am-12:30pm
3	4 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	5 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	6	7	8 Private Play Group Noon-2pm Private Party 6pm 	9 Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm Pre-Walkers 9-10am Walkers 10-11am RSVP to 630-423-4035
10	11 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	12 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	13 Open Play 10am-Noon Everyone welcome!	14	15 Private Play Group Noon-2pm Signing Time 4:30-5:30pm	16 Literacy Program 10-11:30am Birthday Party 10am-Noon RSVP to 630-778-PLAY
17 Father's Day 	18 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	19 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	20	21 Summer Begins 	22 Private Play Group Noon-2pm	23 Pre-Crawlers 9-10am Crawlers 10-11am RSVP to 630-423-4035
24 Hispanic Group 11am-1pm	25 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	26 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	27	28	29	30

All Events are Free unless noted. *RSVP to 630-778-PLAY Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome.

Open Play is new to Plainfield
Everyone is welcome to come out to the Playhouse on June 13th for Open Play!

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 7-9 p.m. 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.

Open Play: This newest program addition is open to everyone.

Come Sign with Us: Come with our without your children to learn basic sign language skills. New words introduced each session. Learn sign language by signing along to the songs from the TV series. All ages are welcome.

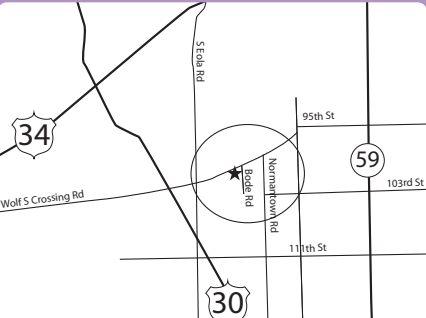
Daddy and Me: Dads get out with the kids and get together with other dads. All ages.

Birthday Party: All ages

New Time for Signs



Please join us Friday mornings at 10am for some fun with learning sign language through songs. All ages welcome.



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Plainfield, IL 60585
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