

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
www.gigisplayhouse.org

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

May 2007

Gigi's Playhouse 5K Fun Run and Walk!!

Save the date.....

Gigi's Playhouse 4th Annual Fun Run and Walk
June 10, 2007 at 9 am

Certified 5K Fun Run

1 Mile Inspirational Walk

and our all new kids "Dash for Down Syndrome"!!



At the beautiful Village Green in the Prairie Stone Complex
 In our own backyard of Hoffman Estates.

- To register and find out more information about the event go to www.gigisplayhouse.org. Walk or run as an individual or consider forming a team with your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers
- Click on the 'CREATE YOUR TEAM' button and be creative.
- Send emails to your potential team members and encourage them to register under your team name.
- Don't forget to register yourself on your team.
- To access and track your team roster, use the 'TEAM CENTER' button in the yellow tool bar of the event details page.

Whether you participate as an individual or as a team, consider creating your own personalized web page to assist with fundraising. Click on the 'FUNDRAISING CENTER' button on the yellow toolbar at the top of the event details page and follow the easy-to-use steps.

Prizes for team spirit, team size, highest team pledges and more! It's easy! Be creative! Here are a couple of ideas: Have your Brownie Troop form a team and earn a badge! Show your school spirit and run with your cross-country team or classmates!

Ways to show your team spirit:

Not only will you raise awareness by being a part of the best finish line in town, but you will also enjoy a morning filled with family fun activities and entertainment.

All profits will benefit the Gigi's Playhouse FREE "Learn to Read" Literacy Program.

We have many sponsorship opportunities available. Contact us at 847-885-7529.



check out "Team Mickey" from last years 5k

Ripple Effects...

This amazing story shows how just one person can make a difference in the lives of hundreds of people! My wife Bert sold a calendar to a co-worker, Sandra Cummins. Sandra sent it to her parents in Canada as a Christmas present. Her parents were so moved by the calendar that they shared it with their church, St. John's Presbyterian. The church was so moved that they decided to observe World Down Syndrome Day on the Sunday before the first day of Spring. On that Sunday, a PowerPoint presentation was shown to the congregation highlighting the Down syndrome creed. On the Saturday evening prior to that, the church hosted a concert performed by Voices of Joy, a chorus of persons with a variety of special needs, including Down syndrome. This one calendar not only raised awareness locally, but it moved a church from another country to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day and raise awareness in their community. It is truly amazing the ripples one pebble can cause.

*Doug Collie
 President and Proud father of Meghan
 Gigi's Too Plainfield, IL*



Name Change!

Please note that all Gigi's material and the website has changed from .com to .org

HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION



Spotlight in Spanish! Nuestros Angeles!

Our feature group this month is our Hispanic Play Group called Nuestros Angeles (Our Angels)! This group, hosted by Blanca and Carlos Santillan, meets the 2nd Sunday of every month. Blanca, a former teacher in Mexico, works as a bi-lingual interpreter. She heard about GiGi's Playhouse and, having a 6-year-old daughter with Down syndrome, she decided to create a playgroup for Spanish-speaking families. This group hosts 4-5 families each month and new families are always welcome. They bring authentic foods and enjoy each other's support and company. Blanca describes the group as her second family. "Coming each month to eat food, talk and watch our kids play together makes us feel like family." Fanny Vasques, mom to an 8-month-old daughter with Down syndrome, states that her favorite part about Nuestros Angeles is watching the fathers talk to each other. "Hearing them talk so proudly about their kids is heart-warming!" she says. Until she found GiGi's Playhouse, Fanny felt like she was alone with her concerns. Now she has found resources, support, and fun in Nuestros Angeles!

The group meets the 2nd Sunday of each month from 11am-1pm. Know other Spanish-speaking families with children with Down syndrome? Tell them about Nuestros Angeles!

Crawlers

"The crawlers class was great! It was fun to be with kids who were right at the same developmental stage as Katia. Cathy gave me some good ideas and techniques that were a little different from the ones Katia's regular PT uses. I think it will be a really helpful class."



The Walkers celebrate St. Patty's Day!

"This week we saw the oldest child in our group become a leader of the activities!"

This quote from host Robyn Wyzinski, physical therapist, depicts just one example of the ways kids are learning and growing at the Walkers group each month. Through a variety of structured gross motor activities, including walking on the balance beam, jumping, kicking and more, each child is able to have fun while practicing on post-walking skills. These children are given the chance to shine and are empowered to lead their peers while developing their gross motor and social skills.



Calling ALL Teens!!

We have a big group of teens coming this month from Willow Creek so come out and PARTY with us!!! Karaoke, dancing, jokes, and hangin out! Last month we even had the quietest one in the group on stage singing!! His Mom was floored when she saw the pictures!! We meet at the Playhouse the 2nd Friday of each month from 7-9pm. Tell your friends!! This is for all teens ages 13-18 with and without Down syndrome. Please RSVP to 847.885.7529.



Thursday is Play Day!

Join us for Open Play every Thursday at 12:30pm. The whole family is welcome!



HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

may 2007



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Literacy Program 10:30 - 1:30 3:30 - 6:30 	2 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 6:00 - 8:00 Special Intention Group 7:00 	3 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! Literacy Program 5:00 - 7:00 	4 Reserved 2-4 Literacy Program 3:00 - 5:00	5 Reserved 10-5 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00
6	7	8 Literacy Program 10:30 - 1:30 3:30 - 6:30 	9 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 6:00 - 8:00 	10 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! Literacy Program 5:00 - 7:00 	11 Reserved 2-4 Open Mic Night 7-9pm High School Ages Literacy Program 3:00 - 5:00	12 Crawlers 9-9:45 am 2 & Under Group 10:00 - 11:30 HOP, SKIP & JUMPERS 12:00 - 1:30
13 Nuestros Angeles (Hispanic Play Group) 11am-1pm	14	15 Literacy Program 10:30 - 1:30 3:30 - 6:30 	16 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 6:00 - 8:00 	17 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! Literacy Program 5:00 - 7:00 	18 Reserved 2-4 Literacy Program 3:00 - 5:00	19 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 Walkers Group 9-9:45am RSVP required Leaps & Bounds 10:00-11:00
20	21	22 Literacy Program 10:30 - 1:30 3:30 - 6:30 IEP Meeting 7 	23 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 6:00 - 8:00 	24 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! Literacy Program 5:00 - 7:00 	25 Reserved 2-4 Friday Friends 7pm 18 and up Literacy Program 3:00 - 5:00	26 Reserved 2:30-6 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00
27 Polish Play Group 11am-1pm	28	29	30 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 6:30 - 8:00 Literacy Night	31 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Literacy Program 5:00 - 7:00		

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 is awesome!!!!

The 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. (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 Brandess Center at
1069 W. Golf Road
Hoffman Estates IL, 60169
847-885-PLAY!

PLAINFIELD LOCATION

Bookkeeper Needed

We're in need of a volunteer to manage our book keeping. We're currently looking for someone with accounting skills for GiGi's Playhouse Too to help out as bookkeeper.

New Karaoke Microphone!!

We have a new microphone for the karaoke machine at the Playhouse! Everyone feel free to sing your heart out!!

4th Annual Fun Run and Walk

Keep your calendar clear for June 10. GiGi's Fun Run and Walk will take place at 9 a.m. at the Village Green in the Prairie Stone Complex.

Reading Tutors Needed

Our Literacy program is in need of additional tutors! This is a fantastic opportunity for teachers, student teachers and therapists (and anyone else interested in tutoring) to get involved and work with our wonderful children! For more information, call Melissa at 630-778-PLAY.

We want to thank the Dimucci family for their generous donation.

We were able to purchase some great equipment for our walker groups. The kids are having a great time with the new balance beam, parachute, step and scooters. They are learning new skills and having a great time doing it. Come join us on the second saturday of the month. See calendar for times and dates. Thanks again!



Notice: If placing items in the storeroom at the back of the Plainfield Playhouse, please take care to not block the back door. Thank you!!

Save the Date!!

Mark the calendar for the 2007 Golf Outing. It is scheduled for Monday, July 30th at the Royal Hawk Country Club in St. Charles.

Attention 1st and 2nd graders!

We are going to start a new group for children entering 1st and 2nd grade next fall. We will be exploring safety issues, table manners, as well as identifying and exploring different emotions. Look for more information on this new and exciting group in the next few months. Anyone intersted in helping facilitate this group please contact Wendy Eurich at 630-423-4035 or weurich@comcast.net



Scrip Is Coming to GiGi's in Plainfield:

You might ask, what is scrip? Scrip is purchasing negotiable gift certificates that can be used just like cash. Scrip is issued by national and local retailers where many of you already shop. GiGi's Plainfield is able to purchase the gift certificates at a discount off the face value and then sell them at full face value. The difference goes directly to GiGi's in Plainfield. Because GiGi's will pay for the gift certificates up-front, retailers are glad to discount anywhere from 2-15%. Scrip can be used to purchase anything from groceries, fuel, clothing, toys, and cosmetics to entertainment, electronics, home improvement, or household services. By converting your buying dollars to scrip and shopping like you always do, you can help GiGi's maintain the building, run and fund the programs, and continue to grow!

Come Sign with us!

We are looking to change the time and day of this group during the summer. If anyone is interested in this group please contact Wendy Eurich at 630-423-4035 or weurich@comcast.net

We need your input!

We are trying to plan some new programs and social events but need your help. Do you have any ideas but don't have the time to facilitate them? Do you want to volunteer a few hours a month but not sure where to start? Let us know. Call the playhouse today or stop by and fill out a comment card. We want to hear from you.












Coming soon...

A bowling party is in the works. Watch for more details next month. Date and time to be announced soon.

PLAINFIELD LOCATION

May 2007



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i> 	2	3	4 <i>Private Play Group</i> 12-2 pm Teen-Tastic 7-9 pm	5 2 & Under 9:30-11:00 am Literacy Program 10-11:30 am 3-4 Playgroup 11:00 am-12:30 pm 
6	7 Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i> 	8 Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i> 	9	10 Come Sign with Us 6-7 pm	11 <i>Private Play Group</i> 12-2 pm	12 Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm Pre-walkers 9-10 am Walkers 10-11am <i>RSVP to 630-423-4035</i>
13	14  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	15  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	16	17	18 <i>Private Play Group</i> 12-2 pm Signing Time 4:30-5:30 pm	19 Literacy Program 10-11:30 am
20	21  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	22  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	23	24	25 <i>Private Play Group</i> 12-2 pm	26 Crawlers 10-11 am <i>RSVP to 630-423-4035</i>
27  Hispanic Group 11 am-1 pm	28  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	29  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	30	31	All Events are Free unless noted. *RSVP to 630-778-PLAY Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome	

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 pm. 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.

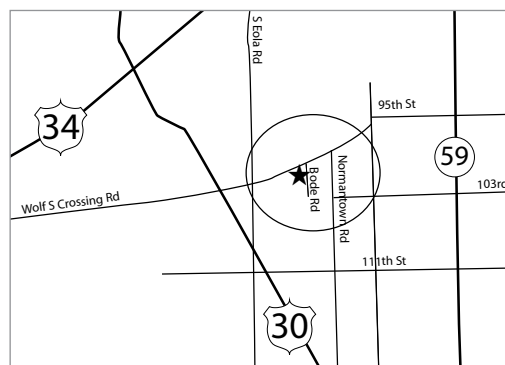
Come Sign with Us: Come with or without your children to learn basic sign language skills. New words introduced each session.

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.

Birthday Party: All ages

10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D
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630-778-PLAY (7529) • fax (630) 778-7519
www.gigisplayhousetoo.com



Dear GiGi's Readers:

As one of the newest members of GiGi's Playhouse Board of Directors, I have been spending plenty of time at the playhouse as I get familiar with my new friends. I've enjoyed observing some of the many programs that we offer, and I've also enjoyed just hanging around to take in the energy of this magical place. The more time I spend here, the more time I want to spend around this inviting, upbeat, safe haven for play. It's such a productive place, yet while all of the work is being done, it's so much fun. Clearly this fun feeling is contagious, because I have witnessed the calls and the walk-ins pouring in. People want to play, volunteer, and donate their time and resources here. I am awestruck at the "wildfire" of curiosity and energy this place is generating. On one particular Saturday, I came in to observe the Walkers Group, which began at 9 a.m. I was greeted by an enthusiastic young therapist and volunteer named Robyn. She proceeded to tell me about the 45-minute program that she had planned for St. Patrick's Day. Not a minute of the program was left to chance. As a mother of one "typical child" (if there even is such a thing) and one child with a developmental delay, I've participated in my share of play programs provided by our local park district, YMCA, etc. I've also observed an abundance of speech, behavioral, and developmental therapies. I was so impressed with Robyn's agenda – complete with puppets, songs, yoga positions, obstacle courses, oral motor practice and an adorable St. Patrick's Day craft for the finale. I thought to myself, "Wow, I would pay to participate in this program – for either one of my sons." Here at GiGi's Playhouse, these fun and free programs are here for the taking. I would encourage all of you mothers to try out any of the programs here at GiGi's playhouse. You won't regret it! I'm inspired by the dedication of GiGi's BOD, the volunteers, tutors and therapists who dedicate their time and talent!

Conie Anesi, BOD and Proud Mom



Want to volunteer?

Come check out our new Volunteer board and pick an area/task to help out! No need to be an expert, just willing to help! We would love your help with the newsletter, cleaning, administration, literacy, 5K and more!! Call 847.885.7529 for more information.



2 & Under

- As told by Concetta Colella to our intern, Nicole Smith

After Samantha was born, a social worker at the hospital mentioned GiGi's Playhouse as a place we should check out. Initially, we weren't ready to visit, as we were just getting adjusted to having a new baby. Then, in August, my mother was talking to a co-worker and she told her how great GiGi's Playhouse is and what they have to offer kids with Down syndrome, so we decided to check it out. We attended the 2 & Under group in September; Samantha was four months old. Having a specified group of kids around the same age as Samantha has helped us to understand what to expect and has allowed me to network with other parents to share stories and get advice. She has gotten to interact with other children, which is great since she is my only child. You can see that she wants to do what the bigger kids are doing. At our most recent visit, she was sitting up to play with the other kids and even got onto her tummy and started kicking her legs like she wanted to crawl! Watching the amazing changes in each kid from month to month as they reach new milestones gives me hope for Samantha's future. It's amazing how seven short months ago half the group wasn't even mobile yet, and now most are crawling and walking. I hope to be as much of an inspiration to new mothers coming in as all of the mothers were to me when I first came to the playhouse.



Check out our new design!

Our models are showing off the new t-shirts and hats ready for purchase! Sizes toddler-2XL. Come by or visit www.gigisplayhouse.org to check them out!



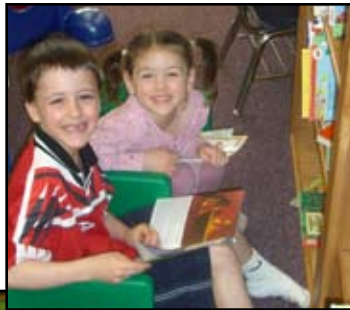
Spread the love...!

At the Spread the Love Gala in February, we were introduced to a documentary about GiGi's Playhouse. Though it is not sad, you may cry at the beauty of it. I remember sitting and watching it at the gala and just being awe inspired. It was so beautiful the way big brother Franco spoke of his sister GiGi and how the parents of other children at the playhouse spoke of the great accomplishments their children have made. I think Nancy put it best when she said, "The beauty of accomplishment for these kids doesn't come in just their accomplishment of a task, but more so in how they get there." They take their time and enjoy the ride, and when they do accomplish something new it's all the sweeter. It's hard not to feel scared for them... that things may take them longer... but I think from now on I'd like to learn that lesson and take my time. It truly makes everything so much more memorable. This video is now available to view at www.gigisplayhouse.org. -An attendee of our Spread the Love Gala



Library!

Calling all readers!! We now have a library at GiGi's ready for you to check out! Books, CDs, DVDs, VHS tapes and cassette tapes! The materials cover a wide array of topics. We have materials about babies with Down syndrome, sign language, therapies, and we also have books written by adults with Down syndrome! We have materials for everyone -- siblings, moms, dads, and babies! Come and check it out! If you have any applicable literature or media that you would like to donate or that you would like the Playhouse to purchase, please let us know!



Save the Date!

May 30th is the next Literacy Night where volunteers and parents come to help create books for our Literacy program. Having pre-made books allows our tutors to use their time with each child more efficiently. It's a fun night of pizza and visiting while benefiting both the Hoffman Estates and Plainfield Literacy programs!



You don't have to have Down syndrome...

Even babies without Down syndrome are happy to spread awareness! Cammy is already on the mission to spreading awareness in her community and she's only two months old! Her whole extended family is all about awareness and acceptance. Cammy's Aunt Aimee sold 45 calendars during Down syndrome awareness month alone! She also gave a presentation at Illinois State University educating her fellow classmates on Down syndrome. Thanks for starting little Cammy out in the right footsteps towards Down syndrome awareness!



More changes in Literacy!

Due to the tremendous growth in our free literacy program, we are making more changes! We now have eight trained tutors, and we are tutoring five days a week! We also have monthly trainings held in alternating places between Hoffman Estates and Plainfield. Each book used is created specifically for the individual child. Each word game played is geared towards the development of the child. We have a variety of books, games, and other tools that we use. Some kids do well on the computer, thus they work on computer reading skills. Some kids do better with interactive books, so they might use our Velcro matching books. Still other kids may prefer to simply turn each page of the book as they learn to read. Each trained tutor will seek out the child's preference to ensure that the child is having fun while learning to read. In an effort to keep reading fun, most children will practice with each type of literacy tool – computer, books, interactive games, etc. For registration information, please call Jenni at 847.885.7529.





1069 W Golf Rd
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

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Save the Date!! **Open Forum IEP Workshop**

Do you have questions about who makes up the IEP team? Not sure who to go to for questions at your school? Wonder what you should bring to the IEP meeting?

Come to GiGi's Playhouse Hoffman Estates on May 22nd at 7pm for answers to these questions and a night of discussion. Sarah Hogan, a school social worker and mom Max, and Maria Villacis, a school speech/language therapist and a sibling of a child with Down syndrome, will be giving a presentation on the topic of "Preparing for your IEP meeting - What to Expect at your Annual Review."



Friday Friends Summer Events!

Come join us from 7pm-9pm for...

June 22nd – Tailgate and BBQ!

July 27th – Softball Game (sibs and parents welcome)

August 24th – Grease Party!



Save the Date!!

GiGi's Too Annual July 30th Golf Outing

