



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

NOVEMBER 2007

Stories from the Heart

From the first time that baby Kate came to Open Play, she stole all of our hearts with her sweet smile and beautiful blue eyes. Her mom's eyes, though, were full of concern. It turned out that Kate, like 40% of children with Down syndrome, needed heart surgery. She was very worried about how a 3 month old baby can undergo open heart surgery. Boy, did she come to the right place! Within minutes, Kate's mom met 3 other parents whose babies had had heart surgery – and 2 of them had the same doctor that Kate was going to have! The relief on her face was noticeable as she listened to the other mom's tell her about their experience. We missed Kate during the week that she was healing but were so happy when she came back!! She was awake and rolling over, no doubt showing off

her new found strength! One week later, baby Jimmy came to Open Play for his first time. He had just had heart surgery as well! He is healing nicely and was very happy to play with his new found friends!! The bond that these moms and dads have just from going through the same situation is so strong. They know firsthand the



fears as well as the relief and joy that takes place during such an emotional situation. The networking and ability to meet other parents that know exactly what you are feeling is a huge support in itself. Thanks GiGi's, for providing a place for us to meet parents, siblings and other family members who have experienced the same things as me and my family!



All 5 of these babies have had heart surgery and are doing great!

What a Party!

Our 4 year anniversary party was a BLAST! We had over 400 people here celebrating with us! Not even the rain could stop us!! A special thanks to Mayor Bill McLeod for giving us a key to the city and to Miss Illinois for greeting each calendar model! With such a huge turn-out you can imag-

ine how much Down syndrome awareness we spread! Look inside for pictures of the event, to hear about our awesome sponsors and to see what an amazing day we had!! Thanks to everyone for coming out and helping us change our world one life, one family, one community at a time!



Do You BELIEVE?

Believe is the theme of our 2008 inspirational and award winning calendars. Each page features our calendar models showing off their potential. Each page has a quote from mom or dad that expresses the feelings they have about their child. Call the Playhouse or go online to order yours. **Give a gift that keeps on giving and show the world you live in that you BELIEVE!**



Look at These Jumpers Go!!

The crawlers group had a fantastic time working on their gross motor development. Jumping on this trampoline strengthened their muscles while getting them ready for the next step....walking!!

Do you have a crawler at home? Call the Playhouse to register him/her for the Crawlers group! We meet the second Saturday of the month.

8-12 Group

This new group is awesome! We had such a great time meeting our new friends and participating in creative play together! Are you an 8-12yr old? Come to our next fun time on November 24th! Call the Playhouse to RSVP.



2 & Under What a Crowd!

These kids had so much fun playing at their Playhouse while mom, dad, and the rest of the families got to meet each other and socialize! The 2 and Under group is a great way to meet new families and share ideas. Join us the second Saturday of the month!



Open Play

What a Party!

We celebrated two birthdays at Open Play this month!! And we had so many new faces! Join us every Thursday from 12:30-2pm for pizza, fun and networking!

Look at these cute babies! They became instant friends as their moms and dads got to know each other and share the joys of having these little ones.



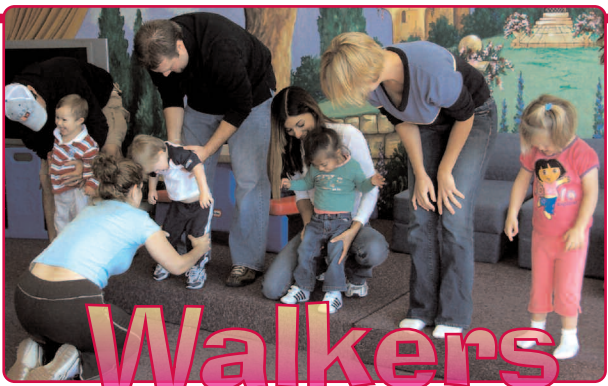
Friday Friends

We will take the month of November off to enjoy some good turkey! See you in December for our Holiday party!

Don't forget our Halloween Party on October 26th!!

Music, Dance and Crafts!

At Hop, Skip and Jumpers, we do it all! We had so much fun singing our favorite welcome song and then participating in activities to get out some of our weekend energy! Then we got to make a fun craft together with all our friends! Join us the second Saturday of the month. Check out the calendar for times!























Walkers

This month was a busy month for these walkers! Climbing steps, maneuvering obstacle courses, using the balance beam... what a work out! The walkers had a great time together working on

strengthening muscle tone and confidence all at the same time! Join us the third Saturday of the month from 9-9:45am.



HOFFMAN ESTATES CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY				
<h1>NOVEMBER</h1>				1 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5:30-7:30pm 	2 Literacy 10am-2pm 	3 Literacy 3-6pm 				
				4	5	6 Literacy 12noon-2pm Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	7 Literacy 5:30-8pm Special Intentions 7pm 	8 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5:30-7:30pm 	9 Literacy 10am-2pm 	10 Crawlers 9-9:45am 2 & Under 10-11:30am Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12noon-1:30pm Private Party 3-6pm
				11	12	13 Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	14 Literacy 5:30-8pm 	15 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5:30-7:30pm 	16 Literacy 10am-2pm 	17 Walkers 9-9:45am Leaps & Bounds 10-11:30am Literacy 3-6pm 
				18	19	20 Literacy 12noon-2pm Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	21 Literacy 5:30-8pm 	22 Thanksgiving 	23 Literacy 10am-2pm Private Party 11am-4pm 	24 8-12 yr old group 10-11:30am
				25	26 Board of Directors Meeting 7pm	27 Literacy 3:30-6:30pm 	28 Literacy Nite 6:30-8:30pm 	29 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5:30-7:30pm 	30 Literacy 10am-2pm 	

Don't Forget: Interested in attending a free Special Needs Financial Planning seminar? Call the Playhouse for more info!!

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.

Don't Forget
Friday Friends
Halloween Party
October 26th 7-9pm
Wear your costumes!

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

Ice Cream Social a Hit!

The Ice Cream Social on Sunday, September 16 was a huge hit!! We had several new families come out to the Playhouse for the first time. The kids and adults all enjoyed making their own ice cream



sundaes. Additionally, all of the young ones had fun playing basketball, going down the slide, dancing and just generally having a blast. Meanwhile, the adults enjoyed spending the time catching up, making new friends and networking.



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!**



Playhouse Pals

The new Playhouse Pals group for 1st-3rd graders met for its second time in September and we had lots of fun with music. We had two new Playhouse Pals join our group. Our next get together is



Saturday, November 17 from 1-3pm when we will learn about safety. We meet on the third Saturday of the month from 1-3pm at GiGi's Too in Plainfield. New Playhouse Pals are always welcome! If you have questions call Lori at **630.375.1765.**

3-4 Year Old Playgroup Notice

The 3-4 Year Old Playgroup will not be meeting in November. When the Playgroup returns in December, the Playgroup will have new leaders — Tom and Lisa Benco. The group will meet in December at its usual day and time; the first Saturday of the month from 11am-Noon. Bring your 3- or 4-year-old out to the Playhouse on Saturday, Dec. 1st for a morning of fun!!



FridayFriends

We would like to bring Friday Friends to Plainfield! Friday Friends will meet one Friday a month and provide fun social interaction for adults 18 years and older. We will have dances, go bowling, have movie nights and other activities. We are looking for some FUN! If you're interested in participating or leading a group like this please email Genia Latka at **geniaanddan@comcast.net** or call **630.272.6598.**



It's Birthday Party Time!!!

Bring your birthday-boy or -girl out to the Playhouse on Sunday, Nov. 11 from 10am-Noon for the open Birthday Party! Everyone is welcome! We will be celebrating birthdays that take place the second part of the year. We'll have cake, drinks and fun! RSVP by calling **630-778-PLAY.**

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.**

Upcoming Group Leaders Meeting

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

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
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Genia Latka
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Contact Information:

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

PLAINFIELD CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<h1>NOVEMBER</h1>				1	2 Teen-Tastic 7-9pm 	3 2 & Under 9:30-11am Literacy Program 10-11:30am 
				4	5 Literacy Program 3-6 pm By appointment 	6 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment Board of Directors Meeting 7pm 
11 Birthday Party 10am-Noon RSVP to 630-778-PLAY 	12 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	13 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment Board of Directors 7pm 	14	15	16 Signing Time 10-11am 	17 Pre-Crawlers 9-10am Crawlers 10-11am RSVP to Judy 630-961-2430 Literacy Program 10-11:30am Playhouse Pals 1-3pm
18 Dress Up Day 1-3pm 	19 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	20 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	21	22 Thanksgiving 	23	24
25 Nuetro Angeles 11am-1pm Hispanic Playgroup 	26 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	27 Literacy Program 3-6pm By appointment 	28	29	30	

All Events are Free unless noted.

*RSVP to 630-778-PLAY

Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome.

Board Positions: We are growing and are in need of new board members. If you are interested, please call the Playhouse at **630-778-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 7-9pm. 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.

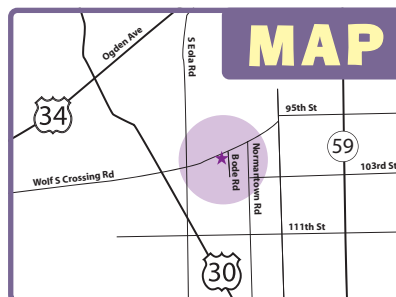
Open Play: Open to everyone.

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

Birthday Party: All ages.

Dress Up Day: Dress Up Day is coming to Plainfield Sunday, November 18th from 1-3pm. Dress Up Day is a special time for "twens", ages 8 and up, to get together for an afternoon of make-up and facepainting, dress up, and snacks. Space is limited. RSVP to Judy Peters at **630.961.2430**.

Pre-Crawlers & Crawlers Notice: Due to the holidays, the November Pre-Crawlers and Crawlers will be held on the third Saturday of November rather than the fourth. Pre-Crawlers and Crawlers will be on Saturday, Nov. 17. The December Pre-Crawlers and Crawlers will be canceled due to the holidays.



Come Sign With Us
2 & Under attendees, come out a half hour before the 2 & Under Playgroup and learn some sign language! The signing class will be from 9-9:30am, just prior to the 2 & Under group.

GiGiFest • October 2007

Thank you to our amazing volunteers and sponsors!!

Home Run Inn Pizza
 Pati Schaefer Photography
 GiGi's BOD
 Mayor Bill McLeod
 Miss Illinois
 DJ Absolutely Entertainment
 Schaumburg Jaycees
 Tommy's Red Hots
 Perfect Valet
 Ronald McDonald
 Hoffman Estates Fire Dept.
 Hoffman Estates Police Dept.
 Babalucis
 Goeberts
 A Zoo to You
 Party Hoppers
 Martial Arts
 M & M Sports
ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS!!!



GiGi's playhouse



Bringing Awareness to the Classroom

Here is a powerful story about the impact our awareness materials can have on kids and their parents...by Beth Spenadel, proud mom of Jacob.

A few weeks into the school year, I visited Jacob's third grade classroom to talk about Down syndrome and friendship. Since Jacob is in a new school this year, I felt that it would help the children (and parents (via letters and pamphlets home) get to know Jacob better. I started with a slide show of photos of Jacob. He was delighted by my visit and the kids loved the pictures. Jacob explained some of them.



Mostly, I wanted Jacob's peers to see him doing lots of the same things that they do: swimming, eating out, bowling, playing at parks, baseball, playing with friends, and enjoying time with his family. Also, I showed some pictures of Jacob doing things that they probably have not done, like horseback riding.

I had posters made at GiGi's featuring

two friends from his old school and the familiar sayings: they all like to eat pizza, bowl, etc. and I brought the Activity Books to class. I also read a book by Todd Parr called It's OK To Be Different. We talked about Jacob's desire to be friends with everyone in the class. I mentioned that things are often harder for him to learn or take more time for him, so he has a helper to assist him. I encouraged the class to take home their Activity Books and share them with their parents. I also sent a letter of explanation

about my talk and some brochures from UPS for DownS so that parents could feel comfortable answering their kids' questions, should they arise. Of course, I took questions from the kids. Here's my favorite: You said it's sometimes hard for us to understand what Jacob is saying. Does he have a hard time understanding us? Wow! Eight-year olds are quite per-

ceptive, aren't they? I quickly explained that Jacob understands just about everything that is said to him, but he sometimes has a harder time explaining things or speaking about them himself.

A few days after my visit, as we were walking into school, a mom stopped us. You must be Jacob, she said knowingly, and introduced herself as a parent in Jacob's class. I introduced myself to her and we chatted. She said it was so helpful that I visited the class and then thanked me for all the information that was sent home. Wow! You can't ask for a quicker or better response than that. Jacob also received a birthday invite to another classmate's party. When the mom called for our address, she said "I just think it's great what you're doing for your son." Again, we're thrilled to be accepted so readily into our new school and to have the materials to support us in sharing our lives with our community.



Claire, Jacob, and Meagan are 3rd graders. They go to school in Glen Ellyn. They all like pizza. They enjoy movies. They like to climb and swing and slide. They all like the Arboretum. Jacob has Down syndrome. They are all friends!
Just like you!!

From a GiGiFest Volunteer...

I know that part of your mission is to open people's minds about Downs Syndrome, so I wanted to share with you your mission in action. My husband mentioned that he saw a child with Down syndrome today, and when he smiled at the child, the response was wonderful. He told me that his response was because of all the great photos he saw of the kids in the newsletter!

That is exactly why we cover our Playhouses, newsletters and other printed material with pictures of our kids! Not just because they are beautiful, but also because we are achieving our mission that way!

Hi everyone who made today's event such a wonderful success! This was my first time at GiGi Fest, and I hope it won't be my last. I was worried at first when it kept raining, but at 12:00 people came out of the woodwork, and the rain stopped. I couldn't believe my eyes at the terrific turnout you had!! I will always be in



awe and impressed by the amount of time and work you put in for these very special, beautiful children. I was honored to be a part of it today. The support you have from the community and all the families is just amazing! I look forward to every Thursday to spend time with all of you. Thanks again for all of your hard work and kindness. You are all as special as the children that you work so tirelessly for!!!!

Did you know?

That GiGi has jewelry that is created specifically for spreading positive awareness about Down syndrome? This month's feature is our bracelet! To order yours, email Megan at vette61@sbcglobal.net.



1069 W Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
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PERMIT NO. 93

**FRIDAY FRIENDS
HALLOWEEN PARTY!**
October 26th 7-9pm
Wear your Costumes!!

Look at these Fall Readers!

Our literacy program continues to grow daily! In fact, we are opening a new Literacy Satellite! This will help reach more kids and get some kids off our waiting list!

The documented success of this program is phenomenal! Call the Playhouse today to get on the waiting list for the next session which starts in January.



I am so grateful for all the moms and dads that helped create an organization in hopes of spreading positive awareness about Down syndrome. The Playhouse provides so much more than awareness. Through parent and community programs, GiGi's lets families know that life with Down syndrome is wonderful, joyful, challenging, and exciting. Thanks GiGi's!

Save the Date!

The Gala is just around the corner and space is limited!

February 9th, 2008 is our **2nd Annual Spread the Love Gala.**

Sponsors & donations needed! Call the playhouse for info and to reserve your seats!!

Holiday Raffle!!

As it starts to get into the winter months, wouldn't it be nice if you had a vacation to look forward to? Purchase some raffle tickets! Last years winners enjoyed a week's long stay in Hawaii, \$10,000 cash and beautiful jewelry! With only 1000 tickets sold, get yours early!! 100% of the proceeds goes to GiGi's Playhouse which means 100% of the proceeds goes to Down syndrome awareness!! How great is that?!?! To purchase yours, call the Playhouse at **847.885.7529**.

