



GIGI'S NEWS

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

Serving 2 Locations

APRIL 2008

What a Birthday Gift!

Most children can't wait for their birthdays because of all the gifts they receive! This year, Ryan and Megan Compton decided to do something a little different for their birthday. Their sister, Erin, has Down syndrome and is the light of their lives! Erin is getting ready to learn how to read and her parents are so excited about it that they have started a GiGi's Playhouse Literacy Satellite in Westmont, IL!

In order to raise money for the Satellite, Ryan and Megan decided to throw a birthday party in honor of their sister with half of the proceeds going towards the Literacy program! So on February 23rd, more than 150 people came out to Arabian Knights, a heated barn full of games and activities, and showed their support for Erin! Diane Compton, mother to these 3 amazing children, says it best herself...



"I still can't believe it happened. We started planning 5 weeks ago and when we first visited Arabian Knights, our estimate was 30 people. Then the calls with offers of raffle prizes started coming. We ended up with 150 people attending. That didn't even count the people that just stopped in to drop off a donation. At this point, we've made close to \$5,000 to be split between GiGi's and Joni and Friends, another organization that Erin benefits from. As for the highlight of the event, it was seeing so many people willing to come out to support this great cause. Friends came from very far away to lend their support and the entire community rallied around us! Erin enjoyed playing hostess, giving lots of hugs and Megan is already planning her party for next year. She has decided she will not have a birthday party without GiGi ever again!"

— Diane Compton, mother



Here is an excerpt from the invitations that Megan and Ryan sent out:

There are a lot of people with big hearts who want to help.

Some of these people with big hearts are found at GiGi's Playhouse. Our family is helping bring GiGi's Playhouse Literacy Program to Bethel Lutheran in Westmont. It's fun because I get to help make books, and I want to start a club for brothers and sisters while they are waiting. I can't wait.

It may sound strange, but I never thought differently about our family after Erin was born. We were the same family, just with a new heart. Even though Erin has Down syndrome, she says "I love you," and gives me hugs when I'm hurt. She has taught me that it really is about what's on the inside that matters. Erin may look different, but inside she is an angel and one of my best friends. I hope you can come to the party. The chance to help all the people who have helped our family is the best gift ever, so don't bring presents.



"Westmont has definitely embraced the opening of the GiGi's Literacy Satellite Site. What a welcome—love and support, financial help, a home—we're set to go!"



Thank you, Compton family for sharing in our mission and bringing the Literacy Program to the Westmont area. The Literacy Satellite is at Bethel Lutheran Church in Westmont. Live close to Westmont? Email Westmont@gigisplayhouse.org to volunteer as a tutor or to inquire about the Literacy Program for your child.

What a Teddy Bear Tea Party!

We had a great group of girls, boys and of course teddy bears for our Teddy Bear Tea!

We decorated cookies, played games and gave each other Teddy Bear valentines!



New New New

PLAYHOUSE PALS is coming to GiGi's Playhouse at Hoffman Estates starting this month for 6-8 years old. This group will meet quarterly and have a new adventure each time. This month we will meet at Pump it Up in Schaumburg at 1230 N. Roselle Rd on Tuesday April 8th at 4pm. You must RSVP to attend because space is limited to 25. Call the Playhouse for more information **847.885.7529**.



2+ Under The Place To Be!

This fabulous group meets each month from 10-11:30am. We talk, play and enjoy our kids together. Bring the whole family!

Hop, Skip + Jumpers

This 3-5 yr old group had a blast! We celebrated Easter by sorting and matching different colored eggs. We made bunny ear headbands and the kids loved playing freeze dance. Join us the 2nd Saturday of the month.

Do you regularly attend this group and want to give back? You can be host for this fun group!

Call **847.885.7529** for more details.

KidsClub!

The 8-12 year old group is so great! We had so much fun this month singing karaoke and dancing!

Join us next month on the last Saturday at 10am! We have so much fun!



Crawlers!

We crawl together from 9-9:45am on the 2nd Saturday of the month. This group is facilitated by a PT who makes the obstacle courses so much fun that the kids don't even know they are getting stronger while they play!



Looking for a Host

We're looking for a host for our Teens Group, Open Mic. We have a blast turning the Playhouse into Club GiGi's! Call **847.885.7529** for more info on how you can help!

Open Play to All!!

Join us every Thursday from 12:30-2pm to celebrate our kids together! We have pizza and juice, music, toys, and fun!

FridayFriends Sing-a-Long!

Back by popular demand is Rick Renner and his guitar! He's calling all adults 18 and over to sing and dance as he strums along. Bring your requests! RSVP **847.885.7529**.

See you on the 4th Friday at 7pm.



HOFFMAN ESTATES CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
April		1 Literacy Noon-2pm	2 Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm Special Intentions 7pm	3 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm	4	5 Literacy 9-10am
		6	7	8 Playhouse Pals meets at Pump it Up 4pm Literacy 4-7pm	9 Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm	10 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm
13 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm	14	15 Literacy Noon-2pm	16 Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm	17 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm	18	19
20	21	22 Literacy 4-7pm	23 Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm	24 Open Play 12:30-2pm Literacy 5-8pm	25	26 McHenry Grand Opening Noon-3pm Literacy 9-10am Kids Club 10-11:30am Private Party 12:30-4pm
27 Polish Group 11am-1pm	28	29 Literacy Noon-2pm Gallery Launch at LUMA 5-9pm	30 Literacy 10am-2pm Literacy 6-8pm Literacy Nite 6:30-8:30pm	McHenry Grand Opening April 26th from Noon to 3pm 1720 Richmond Road, McHenry, IL 60050. Call 815.385.PLAY		

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!

Literacy Nite!!

April 30th from 6:30-8:30pm!

Bring your friends to help make books for our Literacy Program!

New Group!!

Playhouse Pals for our 6-8 year olds!!

RSVP to the Playhouse. **April 8th at 4pm!**

Save the Date!!

April 29th, Travelling Gallery Launch at Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA)!!

See you there! RSVP to **847.885.7529** or your local Playhouse!

GiGi's is Looking to Move!

GiGi's Playhouse Plainfield is looking to move. We have over 100 families visiting the playhouse every month. These families are consumers too and they will buy coffee and sandwiches, get haircuts for their families, etc. In addition, we have

events that draw attention to the retail area for the day and actually provide free advertising for the local businesses. If you know of any property owners that are willing to discuss their property with GiGi's, please call **630.778.PLAY**.

Volunteer Opportunities

We need your help with some upcoming volunteer opportunities. We want to add some more groups and events in addition to our current groups, and to do that we need to raise enough money. The Golf Outing and the 5K will be our biggest fundraisers of the year and they are going to happen within a few months of each other. If you or anyone you know can help with the following events, please contact Wendy Eurich at **weurich@gigisplayhouse.org**.

Charity Bike Ride

September (exact date to be determined). We will need volunteers the day of and 1 to 2 volunteers to help plan the event.

Golf Outing

End of July/Beginning of August (exact date and location to be determined). We need a few volunteers to be on the planning committee and about 15 volunteers the day of. We will need people to get hole sponsors, find golfers, and get raffle items and auction prizes.

5K Run June 8th

We need committee leaders/members for planning the event and approximately 120 volunteers needed the day of the 3.1 mile run. We'll also need sponsors.

Help Our Newsletter

The person who helped put our page and calendar together has resigned and we will need help with that come March. The person putting it together needs to be able to edit the material but the layout is accomplished by Larry Roth of Larry's World of Design.

Evening Open Play

Evening Open Play is waiting for you! Come join us Friday, April 25th from 6-8 p.m. for a night out with the kids. Parents can visit while the kids can play! We'll have pizza and do a craft project. Hope to see you there. Please RSVP to **glatka@gigisplayhouse.org** or call **630.844.1720**.

February Birthday Party

Fun was had by all at the February Birthday Party! We had seven families with kids aged 1-12. Kids jumped in

the inflatable sports jumper, made crafts and enjoyed cupcakes and presents.



Cornhole Tournament

Our First Annual Cornhole Doubles Tournament will be held at 1pm on Sunday, May 18th at Waubonsie Valley High School, Gold Campus, in Aurora. All participants must register, you can request a registration form and pledge sheet at **gigistoo@yahoo.com**. Since this is a fundraiser, each participant will collect pledges, but a minimum of \$50 is required to play. You will be playing with a partner, you may choose your partner or one will be provided for you the day of the event. Each team of two will play 5 games to determine their qualification for the championship game. Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place will be rewarded! There are only 96 spots available (48 teams) so get registered TODAY! Come join us for a light lunch, cornhole and enjoy a relaxing day in May! We hope see you there!

We need volunteers for the day of the event and to find sponsors and prizes.

Carson's Community Day

A BIG thank you goes out to all of you who participated in the Carson's Community Day fundraiser! A special thank you to two volunteers, Amanda Meli and Sue Cicero, who helped make this a successful fundraiser! We had a great day at Carson's on Friday February 23rd. Many people were very interested in helping us out and learning about the wonderful things we do at the Playhouse. The highlight was when two younger girls asked "what is Down syndrome, anyway?" It was explained that people with Down syndrome are like you and I, they just need a little extra help and extra time to learn the things that we do. They were pleased with this answer and continued to watch the "My Sister" video. They learned something about our kids that day and we helped make more people aware about the wonderful opportunities GiGi's Playhouse provides to all of us!

3-4 Year Old Playgroup

Our 3-4 year olds and their families had a blast on Ground Hog Day!

Don't miss the next 3-4 Year Old Playgroup on Saturday, April 5 from 11am to Noon!



PLAINFIELD CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
April		1 Literacy Program 4:30-6pm <i>By appointment</i>	2 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i>	3 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i>	4 Teen-Tastic 7-9pm 	5 Literacy Program 9:30-10am 2 & Under 9:30-11am Literacy Program 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i>  3-4 Year Old Playgroup 11am-Noon	
	6	7	8 Literacy Program 4:30-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	9 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i> 	10 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i> 	11 Pre-Walkers 9-10am Walkers 10-11am RSVP 630.423.4035 Literacy Program 9:30-10am Literacy Program 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i> Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm	
	13	14	15 Literacy Program 4:30-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	16 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i> 	17 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i> 	18 Literacy Program 9:30-10am Literacy Program 11:15-11:45am <i>By appointment</i> Playhouse Pals 1-3pm 	
	20	21	22 Literacy Program 4:30-6pm <i>By appointment</i> 	23 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i> 	24 Literacy Program 4-6:30pm <i>By appointment</i> 	25 Evening Open Play 6-8pm 	26 McHenry Grand Opening Noon-3pm Pre-Crawlers 9-10am Crawlers 10-11am RSVP 630.423.4035
	27 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11am-1pm	28	29 Literacy Program 4:30-6pm <i>By appointment</i> Gallery Launch at LUMA 5-9pm 	30 Literacy Program 4-5pm <i>By appointment</i> 	Save the Date April 29th, Travelling Gallery Launch at Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA)!! See you there! RSVP to 847.885.7529 or your local Playhouse!		

All Events are **Free**, unless noted.

To RSVP, call **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 7-9pm. 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.

McHenry Grand Opening

April 26th, Noon to 3pm
1720 Richmond Road,
McHenry, IL 60050.

call 815.385.PLAY

10052 South Bode Road, Unit D
Plainfield, Illinois 60585

phone **630.778.7529**

fax **630.778.7519**



www.gigisplayhousetoo.com



Get Those 5K Teams Together!

Get ready to RUN! Our 5th Annual 5K Fun Run & 1 Mile Walk will take place on June 8th!! And back by popular



demand is our Dash for Down syndrome!! You can register on line by going to www.gigisplayhouse.org and click on the 'Register' button! There will be PRIZES for teams so get them together and start training! Want to help on the 5K committee? Call **847.885.7529** or your local Playhouse for more info!

After you register, click on the 'i have a choice' link on our website to see an amazing video.



QUOTABLE

Here are some quotes overheard or written down by parents, volunteers, and others that have visited GiGi's recently...

“From the 1st day we walked in, it felt like we had been part of this family forever!”

“Even with all the therapy, my daughter just wouldn't start crawling. Then we started going to GiGi's and she would lay there watching all the other kids crawling around – I swear that's why she decided to start crawling! Now we can't keep up with her!”

“I came when Kira was 1 month old. I was really nervous but we were welcomed with open arms and Kira was out of my arms almost immediately and was held and cuddled by everyone. That doesn't happen everywhere you go.”



“We love the Hop, Skip and Jumpers group. At first my daughter wouldn't say her name — now she walks in and can't wait to sing the name-game with her friends!”

“It's a trickle down effect. I found strength and a voice at the Playhouse. And now I am giving that to Veronica.”

“The Crawlers group has given us a chance to participate in therapy in a group setting and from a different perspective. It allows her to socialize with the friends she's made over the last year. Oh yeah, and I get to socialize too!”



“I volunteer here each week because I know that my few hours of work has a direct effect on these kids and families. I just love being surrounded by people who share the same passion. It's invigorating!”

“It's so wonderful to be able to connect with families and children that are in the same age range. Sharing information has been great!”



“It's like a second home. I can't even explain it without tearing up with gratitude.”

GRAND OPENING!!

GiGi's Playhouse McHenry!!

Saturday, April 26th, Noon-3pm

Join us at the newest Playhouse located at 1720 N. Richmond Road (Rt. 31) in McHenry

GiGi's Playhouse McHenry is proud to announce that we have a Board of Directors and a Building! We've secured a group of ten dedicated people who have eagerly stepped into the path of leadership to start the new Playhouse in McHenry.

Under the amazing direction of Susan DuBois, Aunt to Rylee Lewis, our new friends and families have bond-



Rylee Lewis

ed to make the newest Playhouse a success! We held our first meeting in February and have hit the road running with March and April calendars chock full of planning and development. We are busy as bees, working on starting up the new location. Our first task is getting the building complete. The Playhouse is located at 1720 N. Richmond Road (Rt. 31), a storefront in McHenry Plaza.

We've had to begin from the ground up to convert the building space into our new lovely home. Susan shares that "it's been a remarkable experience as the response to starting GiGi's in McHenry has been outstanding."

The love is overflowing with support from parents and volunteers. A big thanks to DDC and other local support groups for all their help! Interested in volunteering?

Email us at:

mchenry@gigisplayhouse.org.

GiGi's Playhouse McHenry

Contact Numbers

Phone:

815.385.PLAY

Fax:

815.385.7538

Board of Directors

Susan DuBois
Carol AnCel
Michele Gehrke
Rick Egbert
Amy Sachs
Scott Bradfield
Henry Krukowski
Michelle Polizzi

Want to Help?

*We need tutors,
volunteers, and more.
Together we can make
a difference.*

Daddy's Little Girl

When Emilee was born and she was instantly daddy's little girl, I was so excited. We were told shortly thereafter that they suspected she might have Down syndrome. We didn't know much about Down syndrome and that's where the journey began. On our search to find help and guidance we met so many people whose lives have been touched by Down syndrome and how it changed many things for the better.

Then we started looking for support groups which is very limited in southeastern Wisconsin. We were somewhat discouraged until our Birth to Three Coordinator told us that GiGi's Playhouse was thinking of opening a facility to serve Northern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin. We were so excited! My wife and I went to the first meeting regarding this and felt it was exactly what we needed for our fami-

ly. We went home and looked at your website, did some research and decided to visit the Hoffman Estates location. When we walked in we were instantly welcomed and I felt a bond with people I just met. My wife has now become an advisory board member for the McHenry location and I am very proud of her.

My daughter has changed my life in so many ways. She has taught me to be more compassionate, loving, understanding, patient and to share quality time with my family. Keeping in mind she is only six months old I can only imagine what this adorable little girl, who has a smile and laugh that melts my heart, will teach me in her lifetime. Everyday I give thanks that God has blessed me with such a great family and for everyone who has been brought into our lives.



Robert Sachs,
proud Daddy to baby Emilee



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
www.gigisplayhouse.org

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Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

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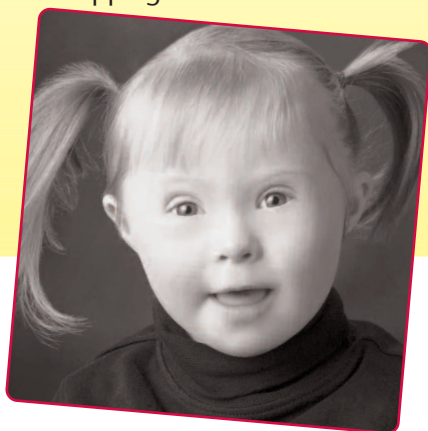
SAVE THE DATE!!
Grand Opening
GiGi's Playhouse McHenry!!
Saturday, April 26, Noon-3pm
Look inside for details!
See you there!

SAVE THE DATE

Traveling Gallery Launch at L.U.M.A.!

You saw the Traveling Gallery unveiled at the Gala last month to the GiGi's family and now we are ready to launch it to the public! On Tuesday, April 29th we will be showcasing the gallery at the Loyola University Museum of Art. LUMA is located in historic Lewis Towers on Chicago's fabulous Magnificent Mile in the heart of Chicago's cultural and shopping district.

GiGi's is excited to reach new individuals, corporations, schools and communities with this platform for spreading positive Down syndrome awareness. The beauty and depth in these portraits truly gives these individuals a voice you can't help but hear! Join us as we show the Windy City the blessing that has touched our lives! RSVP to **847.885.7529**.



Who: YOU!

What: The launching of our Traveling Gallery

Where: Loyola University Museum of Art
820 N. Michigan Av,
Chicago, IL

When: April 29th

Time: 5-8pm

Why: To Spread Awareness about Down syndrome!