

UIUID NUVD Loving a child with Down syndrome is contagious... Help us spread the love! Hoffman Estates Fox Valley McHenry Chicago Sioux City

Now Serving 5 Locations

GiGi's Playhouse Sibling Video Receives an Emmy Award!

What an honor! The GiGi's Playhouse Sibling Video was granted an EMMY from the National Academy of Television

and Sciences! Earlier this year, GiGi's Playhouse teamed up with channel 2 anchor Rob Johnson and the Barrington High School Film

Class to create a Sibling Video. This powerful video featured siblings ages 5-adults who shared their perspective of what life was like growing up with a brother or sister with Down syndrome. Though the stories were different, the



theme was the same; that their lives were blessed beyond what they could ever have imagined! This video brings

> hope to parents and inspires everyone who watches it—it must have inspired the folks who awarded the Emmy as

well! It is an excellent awareness tool to be used in schools and at community functions call your local Playhouse to get a copy of this video.

To view this award winning video, go to:

www.gigisplayhouse.org

2 Year Old Reads in Literacy Program!

MAY 2009

When Hayden's speech therapist told us about the literacy program, our initial thought was, "Hayden is a little over 2 years old and has Down syndrome, how is this going to work?" But, after assessing the skills that Hayden has, we realized that this could

be a great program for her. Hayden loves to match objects and loves to imitate, which has enabled her to start



the literacy process. What she has been able to accomplish in a short period of time is absolutely amazing. She knows lots of vocabulary words and is able to match almost anything.

We are extremely thankful that a place like GiGi's exists and that they offer such wonderful programs, like the literacy program.

Thank You GiGi's! — Haden's Mom

GiGi's Playhouse 5K Fun Run & Walk Sun., June 14

Our 6th annual event will have something for everyone — a 5K Fun Run, a 1 Mile Inspirational Walk, and back by popular demand, the kids Dash for

Down syndrome! Every Step Counts! Help us Spread the Love! Register your team at:



www.gigisplayhouse.org today!

5K Volunteers Needed!!!!

Our 5K date is approaching fast! Here are some ways you can help: Do you have muscles and energy? We need you to pack/load the truck, unload the truck at the race site, or carry supplies and help with setup (3 different teams). Course Marshalls are needed to direct race participants,

Parking Lot Team is need to guide cars to parking areas. Join us for some fun in the sun! To volunteer, contact Sara at: svandahm@gigisplayhouse.org

Race teams are forming now gather your friends and family and create a team! You can sign up your teams on our website to support your favorite Playhouse or a Playhouse child!



Help Our Literacy Program! Educatio

Volunteers are needed to create materials for our Literacy program! Copy, fold, cut and laminate – we will show you how, and you will be helping the kids who learn to read in our Literacy program! **Wednesday**, **May 27th, 6:30-8:30pm**. We work on Literacy books on the last Wednesday of each month, so mark your calendar! Please email us at **info@gigisplayhouse.org** to RSVP so we have materials ready to go!



Educational Speech Seminar

Hoffman Estates Speech Development in the Early Years

Have a child 2 or under? Come to learn ways to enhance communication.

Birth-2 years. May 4th, 7-9pm at the Hoffman Playhouse

Language & Communication

Lora White focuses on all aspects of communication, including oral motor delays, for parents. Bring your questions to this meeting!

For families of children 3-6 years old, June 1st from 7-9pm at the Chicago Playhouse

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Ashley recently isi

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Ashley recently joined our Literacy program at Hoffman. She is continuing to build her sight word vocabulary and read short books in Reading A-Z and some beginning trade books. She is part of our Phonics program and uses words parts (beginning sounds and rhyming endings) to build words. Ashley is making great progress, but her favorite part of GiGi's is still probably the ball pit!

i have a voice

The *i have a voice* Traveling Gallery has been at the Ela Library for the month of March. Here is an excerpt from a letter from the library about the impact of this national awareness campaign: "From the excitement of our opening day activities to the comments written in our guest book to the quiet moments spent in observation of patrons experiencing the exhibit, I must report that the entire experience was a success!

Groups of people came from local organizations serving people with special needs, families came together as well as individuals all enjoyed the stunning photographs, their positive life affirmations and the *i have a voice* DVD. We have entries in our guest book from children, adults, grandparents, students and people from more that 4 states! The exhibit offers such a complete message of positive potential. Nearly 1000 people were able to view and be moved by the message it so dramatically delivers."

Here's a sampling of some comments in our guest books: **From a child**—I love how the kids tell the whole world what they want to be.

From an adult—Things have really changed since my brother was born with Down syndrome 46 years ago!

From a family—Our baby girl has Down syndrome—she is a blessing—thanks you for sharing; it gives us hope!



Sioux City

Sioux City's Playhouse is Officially Open!

The Sioux City GiGi's Playhouse Grand Opening was a HUGE success!! They are so excited that the dream has



Kicking Off Summer Teen Group Party!!

If you are 12 years and older come enjoy a great start to summer with our Teen Group! We will have some summer fun with music, dancing, Karaoke, snacks and a Wii Bowling Tournament!

Fox Valley Open House

What started as a Playhouse in a warehouse has now become so big that they had to move! The Plainfield location had so many families that they outgrew their space and are now located directly in the Fox Valley Mall! The minute you walk into their new space, you feel like you are part of the GiGi's Playhouse family. Their walls are covered with awareness materials, there is always someone playing the piano, being taught in Literacy, or hanging out become a reality... THANKS to so many hard-working and dedicated people. Go to the website to check out our cal-



Birthday Pals

Are you celebrating a Birthday in April, May or June? Come celebrate with friends at GiGi's Playhouse on **Sunday, May 31st** from **1:30-3pm**! We will have cupcakes and play Birthday games!

with new parents!

Join us on **Sunday, May 3rd**, **1-4pm** for an open house to celebrate our new GiGi's Playhouse location in the Westfield Fox Valley Shopping Center. We are located just west of the Toys R Us between the Enchanted Castle and the Sears Parts & Supplies.

Event will take place rain or shine. We will have food, games and entertainment. Everyone is welcome!

Please RSVP with the number of people attending by calling **630.778.PLAY** or **foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org**.

Advocacy at a University

Each year GiGi's works with Elmhurst college, helping prep their future teachers and educators about the reality of Down syndrome and all the blessings that come along with it. Last year

we spoke at Northern Illinois University and this year GiGi's was invited to speak to students at Roosevelt Univer-sity in April. Students in the classroom had minimal or no exposure to disabilities, and were able to ask questions and meet parents and kids from the Hoffman Playhouse! They learned about the kinds of important programming that is necessary for our children, and how bright their future can be!



endar full of activites! E-mail Soiuxcity@gigisplayhouse.org for more information.



Signing Times

Please join us for Signing Times on **May 2nd & 30th at 9:30am** (before Open Play)! Kids & Parents alike will be learning basic signs to encourage language development skills.



Rally the Capitol!

Join the Down syndrome community to support the Blueprint for System Redesign for Illinois. On **Thurs., May 21st**, bus leaves Oakbrook Shopping Center at 6:30am headed to Springfield! Leaves Springfield at 2:30pm. Go to **www.eventbrite.com**

to register.





Kids

This fun and fast-paced group incorporates social, communication and confidence-building skills and activities. In March and April, we celebrated spring! We played springtime bingo, danced, and read a fun book about a hedgehog. The South Barrington Garden Club brought little tree seedlings for the kids and talked about planting. May 23 - if weather

Teen Group

Check the Hoffman page on the website for updates on the date and time of our May meeting. We had some karaoke fun in March, and April's luau was a blast! We're planning to celebrate Cinco de Mayo in May-we will have a fiesta! Please feel free to bring a sombrero or your fiesta-themed snack to share! 13-17 year old teen peer buddies will be joining us!





out in the

park on a nature scavenger hunt and

with mini Olympics! All kids ages 9-12 are welcome - students who do not have Down syndrome are invited to join in our fun!



Friday Friends Laser Tag was a blast! There is no meeting in May, but mark your calendars for a BBQ at Roberta's house in lune!

We Love Volunteers!

Brett is enjoying some time with some of his volunteer friends at Open Play! Volunteers are the backbone of GiGi's and make all of our programs and events possible. Therapists host groups for our kids. Teachers tutor in

our Literacy program, helping our kids learn how to read. Teens volunteer as



peer buddies during our Teen program. Literacy materials are created, newsletters are folded and labeled for mailing, we have tons of data entry — the list goes on and on and our volunteers are amazing! Interested in helping Spread the Love? Call or email Sara at:

svandahm@gigisplayhouse.org

Playhouse Pals and Hop, Skip & Jumpers

We will be Springing into May! We will be incorporating direction following, picture recipes, picture schedule, peer partners and of course — messy arts & crafts!



Check Out Our New Groups Karate Kickers Super Sib Sunday

Welcome Kokoro Martial Arts! Each 45 minute class will help children with balance, strength, coordination, self esteem and basic self defense. There will be no body contact. No uniform is necessary just comfortable clothes and shoes. Parent(s) need to be present. Siblings are welcome. You must RSVP to Julie at **815.436.3817**.

Ages 8-12: 5:15–5:45pm 13 and up: 6–6:30pm Our first class will meet **Wed, May 20th**.

Evening Open P

Our Evening Open Play group is growing and will now be called GiGi's Family Night. In March, we celebrated spring by creating a little chick cracking out of his egg. The kids had a lot of fun while the parent's mingled! We ate lots of pizza, fruit, and cookies. We also celebrated our friend Nikolas's 2nd birthday! We ended the evening with a story about a bunny having to find his own eggs hidden in the forest then the kids participated in their own Easter egg hunt. It was nice to see so many new This group is designed for children in grades 1-8. The children will participate in a spirited mix of games, activities and discussion about the good and not-so-good moments of having a sibling with Down syndrome.

We will meet on Sun., May 31st, 2-5pm.

Please RSVP to Anne at the playhouse at 630.778.PLAY or email at: foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org

faces! If you'd like to join us, our next group will meet **Friday, May 29th**. Please RSVP Genia at **630.844.1720** or **glatka@gigisplay**house.org.

A Call for Therapists

We are currently looking for therapists to run the walkers and crawlers groups on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month.

If you are interested or know of someone who is, please contact Anne at 630.778.PLAY or email at foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org

Thank You

A special "Thank You" goes out to the Student Council of Central High School in Clifton, IL. The students collected donations for GiGi's Playhouse– Fox Valley from their Down syndrome awareness walk-a-thon in the amount of \$1,225.00. Thank you for supporting our programs and letting everyone know the potential of our children!



SUN MON TUE WED THUR May 2008					FRI Literacy 4-5pm Signing til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm	SAT Literacy 11am-1pm 2
Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Play Group 10am-Noon	Literacy 4–6:30pm	Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 4-6:30pm	Literacy 5–6:30pm 6	Literacy 7 10–11am Literacy 1–3pm Literacy 5–7pm	Literacy 4-5pm Signing til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Teen Tastics 7-8pm	Literacy 11am-1pm
10	Literacy 4–6:30pm	Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 4-6:30pm Wendy's Night 5-8pm	13	Literacy 10–11am Literacy 1–3pm Literacy 5–7pm Options & Advocacy 10–11:30am	Literacy 4-5pm Signing til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Kids Club & FFF 6:30-8pm	Literacy 11am-1pm
17	Literacy 4–6:30pm	Open Play 10am–Noon Literacy 4–6:30pm	Literacy 5–6:30pm 20	Literacy 21 10-11am Literacy 1-3pm Literacy 5-7pm	Literacy 4-5pm Signing til Dawn 5:30-6:30pm Friday Friends 7-9pm	Literacy 11am-1pm Skill Builders Saturday 1-3pm
Daddy & Me 24 9–11am 31	Literacy 4–6:30pm 25	Open Play 10am-Noon Literacy 4-6:30pm	27	Literacy 28 10–11am Literacy 1–3pm Literacy 5–7pm Book Making Make & Take Night 6:30–8pm	Literacy 4–5pm Signing til Dawn 5:30–6:30pm	Theme Open Play 30 10–11:30am May Flowers— come plant with us! Literacy 11am–1pm

Go Morgan

When GiGi's Playhouse

By Carrie Lucas

opened in McHenry I was really excited because I wanted to get my daughter, Morgan, into the Literacy Program. Morgan LOVED it and she is so proud of herself! With the help she's gotten from GiGi's Playhouse and her awesome teacher at school, Morgan is reading C-level books! Morgan also participates

in the monthly Skill Builders program at McHenry and really enjoys being able to move between the handwriting, math, art, and phonics learning centers. It's great to see her so enthusiastic about learning and I am grateful for the part GiGi's has played in helping her become a lifelong learner!

Spreading Awareness in the Community

Chris Newlon, Rebecca's mom, was invited to participate in the McHenry High School's Diversity Program. She spent a day with eight Freshmen Health classes talking about Down syndrome and children with special needs. The Diversity program's goal is to get students to accept differences in people, to not pick on others because they are different, but to celebrate each other for who they are.

She spoke about her choice to keep her baby, and about the lives of people with Down syndrome. Chris addressed some of the differences a child with Down syndrome has, such as low muscle tone and speech. The students asked sincere questions and listened eagerly. One of the students responded "wouldn't our world be a better place if we were all like that!" Chris reports that many were touched by how much they just didn't know about Down syndrome and many asked about volunteering at the Playhouse to learn more and help out. She was invited back for teaching another lesson in the fall semester!

Rotary Parade Celebrates Volunteers



The Rotary Club of McHenry sponsored a Volunteer Parade to highlight all of the good in our community in these tough economic and challenging days. GiGi's Playhouse proudly sent a group of volunteers, families, and even the McHenry Road Pirates joined us in the march through town.





GiGi's Playhouse Chicago Open Design Event

Come explore the Chicago Playhouse while you design your own custom LILL handbag! On **May 3, 2009**, Playhouse volunteer, Michelle Pusatera will host a LILL Studio handbag event at the Chicago Playhouse. Bring your friends and create the handbag of your dreams! The best part is that up to 15% of your purchase will go to support GiGi's Playhouse. The event runs from 1:30–5pm. Stop by and join in the fun!!

21 Club & GiGi's Playhouse

The 21 Club began over 3 years ago with a mom, Cathy Morgan, looking to create a playgroup for children with Down syndrome and their families. 21 Club members rotate hosting a monthly playgroup by inviting other members into their homes. Many of the members of 21 Club are also involved



Motivational Mondays

Please join us on **Monday, June 1st at 7pm** when we welcome our special guest Lora White, SLP. Lora will present an educational seminar on speech communication and development in 3–6 year old children. This event will provide you with valuable information — bring your questions! with GiGi's Playhouse. Recently, the 21 Club monthly playgroup has been held at the Chicago Playhouse. We love sharing our space with this "partner" in our mission. GiGi's Playhouse and the 21 Club both strive to provide information, support and networking packaged in the awesome gift of PLAY.



SIDEWALK SALE!!

Start your spring cleaning and get rid of your "outgrown" stuff for Down syndrome awareness. Want to ebay it instead and donate the \$\$? We'll take it! Come by the Chicago Playhouse @ 3660 W. Irving Park Rd. on **Sat. May 16th** between 9am and 5pm for great deals and family fun. Contact Melisa Gibel at **melisa.gibel@gmail.com** or **773.329.3077** to volunteer!



Hoffman Estates 1069 W. Golf Road Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

SAVE THESE DATES

May 4th Hoffman Speech Therapist Seminar Birth-2yrs. 7pm at Hoffman

May 4th Speaker Series: Sibling Special 7pm at Chicago

May 14th Hoffman Mom's Night Out 7:30pm at Hoffman Estates

May 16th Sioux City Faces Book Photo Shoot Friday, 10am-3pm in Iowa Call 712.226.PLAY for an appt.

June 14th 5K Run & Walk Sign your team up on the website! www.gigisplayhouse.org

July 30th Fox Valley Annual Golf Outing

September 19th Fox Valley Charity Bike Ride

Register Now for the 5K!

Every step counts! Get your teams together and go to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** and create your fundraising page. **June 14, 2009**—See you there!



Save the Date @ McHenry's Playhouse

REGISTER NOW for the **Hawgs & Hot Rods Krusin' 4 the Kids** Ice Cream Poker Run fundraising event on **Sunday, June 28th**, in Woodstock. Check out the website for more details!



Fox Valley 4024 Fox Valley Drive Aurora, IL 60504 630.778.PLAY

McHenry 1720 North Richmond Road McHenry, IL 60050 815.385.PLAY

NOW

LOCATIO

Chicago 3660 West Irving Park Road Chicago, IL 60618 773.583.PLAY

Sioux City 1551 Indian Hills Drive, Suite 7 Sioux City, Iowa 51104 712.226.PLAY

Watch the Website!

Updates for programs and activities are on the website, so check it out! Go to:

www.gigisplayhouse.org and click on your location.