



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

May 2010

Newsletter

www.gigisplayhouse.org
info@gigisplayhouse.org

Hoffman Estates Location
1069 W. Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
847.885.PLAY (7529)

Chicago Location
3660 W. Irving Park Rd.
Chicago, IL 60618
773.583.PLAY (7529)

Fox Valley Location
4024 Fox Valley Center Dr.
Aurora, IL 60504
630.778.PLAY (7529)

Sioux City Location
1551 Indian Hills Drive,
Suite 7
Sioux City, Iowa 51104
712.226.PLAY (7529)

McHenry Location
5404 W. Elm St. Suite A.
McHenry, IL 60050
815.385.PLAY (7529)

Des Moines Location
10430 New York Ave
Suite A
Urbandale, IA 50322



1st Phonics Graduate!

Lydia is making history as the very first graduate of the Phun with Phonics Level One Reading Program. She began her reading career in July 2007, and on March 11, 2010, completed her last word family! She has no intention of stopping, though. Lydia plans to continue her Literacy tutoring, and

tackling more and more words.

To celebrate her monumental achievement, Lydia's parents planned a mini-graduation ceremony. There, before a captivated audience, Lydia read a series of books, ending with one of her favorites, Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss. There was no one in the room untouched by Lydia's reading. So much more than just calling words, she employed skillful intonation in reading an animated and entertaining story.

"We hoped, we dreamed of her reading someday like her brother James," said mom, Laura. "Our dream came true through the GiGi's reading program. 'Wow,' she would say, 'look at all the word families that I know!' And you could see how proud she was of her academic achievement! She was energized to do more!"

Lydia is a testament to power of determination, hard-work and a belief in the great potential of our children. Congratulations, Lydia, and keep-on reading!



6th Playhouse Opens in Des Moines!!

We are rapidly approaching our Grand Opening date of May 22nd, and couldn't be more excited! We have had great help from volunteers from painting walls, creating murals, building walls to create three tutoring rooms, building a two story play loft complete with slide and puppet show areas, building two stages, etc. Things are looking great and energy levels are high! There is light at the end of the construction tunnel! We are also well into the planning of our grand opening. We will be having carnival



games, face painting, 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and a dj at our event! We hope to see a lot of happy, smiling faces at our Grand Opening, and can't wait to start serving our families, children, and community!



One of our families, the Vargas family, traveled all the way to Chicago for Braden to be part of the 2011 Awareness Calendar! Braden's father has helped with building the literacy rooms in the playhouse and the whole family was amazed when they visited the Hoffman Estates Playhouse. They are so excited to be part of bringing this vision and mission to Des Moines!

Join us at the Grand Opening on May 22nd from 10am-12pm!

**GiGi's Playhouse Des Moines
10430 New York Avenue, Suite A in Urbandale**

5K! It's one month away!

Get your team together and register online today! The top 5 teams will get a tent at the event!! This event is our largest Down syndrome awareness event and spread incredible awareness! Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to register!



Girl Scouts and Kids Club Sprung into Spring Together!

The Girl Scouts had a great time at Kids Club on Saturday! The leader said, "Our Girl Scouts (and us moms!) enjoyed our visit to GiGi's this weekend. We had about 15 Girl Scouts or so and we brought clay pots to decorate and filled each pot in with dirt and flowers! Many of the kids gave their pots to their moms. The kids loved it. We also played freeze dance - we saw some awesome moves - and we talked a little about ourselves. The kids had so much fun that we never even got to the smoothies that we were going to make. We needed more time! On our way home, the girls were telling me that they really enjoyed themselves and want to come back again. I think that maybe they didn't know what to expect - since most of them had never even met a person



with DS before - but they were very surprised to see how much the kids were just like them - they liked to dance, talk, paint, dress up and just have fun meeting new friends! I really think that the Girl Scouts have a better understanding of DS now and will be able to tell others how much fun they had - thank you again!"

Crawlers are on the Move!

The Crawlers program is one of our biggest programs and focuses on developing the muscle tone and skill development that takes place when learning to crawl. As with any GiGi's program, the parents are given tools to practice at home. Both child and parent gain in confidence as these skills are developed and success is reached!

Who should come? Kids who are not crawling yet, who are getting up on their hands and knees, commando crawling, preparing to crawl, and those just starting to stand and take first steps can all benefit from this program.

The therapists that lead this program look at each component of what a child gets out of crawling physically. If a child is not crawling yet, they work on the muscles that are not being used to help get the child crawling. They can help with muscle strengthening and development for kids who scoot rather than crawl, a child who is in the early stages of crawling, or a child who is just taking first steps.

Siblings are welcome, and encouraged to attend. Siblings can be great motivators for a child, and they participate in the program with their brother or sister, and are taught things to work on at home as well.

Parents work with their child during the program under supervision, and are given ideas to try at home. The program's goal is to give our kids the opportunity to improve in a welcoming environment. Check your local Playhouse for dates and times of this therapeutic movement class!



Programs & Activities

- 2 & Under Playgroup** – Children play while their parents network with each other.
- Crawlers** – Focuses on crawling, fine motor skills and social interaction with peers.
- Walkers** – Focuses on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities.
- Hop, Skip & Jumpers** – Promote friendships, social skills, and interactive play through fun creative activities! (3-5 year olds)
- Playhouse Pals** – Structured playgroup focuses on developing friendships and confidence all while having a great time! (6-8 year olds)
- Kids Club** – Fast paced group incorporates social, communication and confidence-building skills and activities! (9-12 year olds)
- Teen-Tastic** – Pizza party of watching movies and playing games. (13-17 year olds)
- Friday Friends** – Karaoke, dances, softball games — the fun never ends! (Adults 18 + over)
- Nuestros Angeles** – Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education!
- Polish Group** – Polish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education!
- Open Play** – Everyone welcome to this weekly gathering of networking and friendship building.
- Literacy** – Free program teaches kids how to read. By appointment only — Call ahead!
- Daddy & Me** – Dads, bring your kids and meet other fathers in your area!
- Reserve it!** – Playhouses can be reserved for any function or other special needs group.

Kids Club – more than just fun!

Kids Club is our amazing program for kids ages 9-12 years old! This group which has an equal number of peers with and without Down syndrome and participates in amazing activities from gymnastics to a Talent Show to relay races and games in the park! They invite guests to join their program, including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and a group of college students from Roosevelt University! They love having fun with all of their new friends, as well as the chance to spread positive awareness about Down syndrome with so many people.

In the midst of all of the fun, host Ellyn said that many of the activities are geared towards building self confidence and self expression. Self confidence increases with improving gross motor skills, fine motor skills, in talking/performing in front of others, sharing thoughts and ideas, making suggestions, socializing, and taking turns in a group. Ellyn feels that Kids Club has helped Sam's confidence. She said that it has helped him feel more comfortable getting up in front of other people. He recently joined Special Gifts Theatre and Ellyn just saw him in a show!

Samuel's mom said, "When we started going to GiGi's, it was magic! Ellyn and Gary have been instrumental in his progress, they are engaging and innovative to keep the group so enthused. Kid Club has teenage volunteers and Samuel totally enjoys that and is modeling more as almost a teenager.



I think he has become more verbal and entertaining because of these events. He just finished performing in "High School Musical" with the Special Gifts Theater. He had a great role and many lines. He had no fear of the audience. I attribute a lot of that to the times he has gotten up at GiGi's to do a dance or a song in front of others!"

Check your local Playhouse calendar for dates and times of Kids Club!

Four & Fabulous

It is hard to believe our Danica turned four! She is growing up so much. At preschool, she is the only student in her integrated classroom that knows the name of all 17 students! She also taught her teacher the signs for the colors they work on. Recently at her IEP, they took her off a speech order because she has met all her goals. Danica participates in lots of programs at GiGi's. In the literacy program, she



is working on numbers and word recognition. We are very excited about the recital in May that our Leaps and Bounds group is taking part in. It is just one of the reasons we are thankful to have GiGi's Playhouse in our lives. GiGi's is a place for us to share and grow with other families who understand the challenges and the blessings of loving someone with Down syndrome.



NEW GROUPS!!

Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Group starts Sat, May 15 @ 10am

Bring your family on Sat, May 15 @ 10am for some physical therapy, socialization, refreshments & FUN!! Wilza Schmied will be on hand to give you tools to utilize at GiGi's & at home!



2 and Under Group starts Sun, May 16 @ 2pm

Bring your family & friends on Sun, May 16 @ 2pm for some fun with your youngster! Get acquainted with other parents in our area and learn some new techniques!



Family Fun Night

Family Fun Night with Pizza will be held on Friday, May 14 @ 6pm! Everyone join us for family, fun, friends, and pizza!



Ladies Night Out

Ladies Night Out Open House will be held on Friday, May 7 from 6-9pm! We will have vendors from various places including but not limited to: Mary Kay, Upper Case Living, Pampered Chef, Miche, Scentsy, Tastefully Simple, and more. All will be selling items and donating proceeds to GiGi's Playhouse!! Bring your friends to enjoy laughter, shopping, food & drinks!

Teen Tastic

May Day Pizza Party on Saturday, May 1



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		MAY 2010				1 May Day Leaps & Bounds 11:45a - 12:15 @ CDS Teen Tastic 12:30-2 Pizza Party
2 Board of Directors Meeting 2p	3	4	5 Open Play 5-6:30p	6	7 Ladies Night Out Open House 6-9p	8 Leaps & Bounds 11:45a - 12:15 @ CDS
9 Mother's Day	10	11	12	13	14 Open Play Family Night 6-7:30pm with PIZZA	15 Leaps & Bounds 11:45a-12:15 @ CDS NEW Nuestros Angeles (Hispanic Group) 10-11:30a
16 NEW 2 & Under Group 2-3:30p	17	18 Open Play 6-7:30p	19	20	21 Leaps & Bounds Rehearsal 6p @ Eppley Auditorium	22 Leaps & Bounds Recital 2p @ Eppley Auditorium
23	24 Open Play 9-10:30a Motivational Monday 6p	25	26	27 New Volunteer Night 6p	28	29
30	31 Memorial Day					

The More the Merrier!

"We absolutely love volunteering together at GiGi's Playhouse in Fox Valley!" says Deb Bakke and her daughter, Meghan. In fact, the mother/daughter duo enjoy it so much, they often invite friends to come along for everything from helping at family night, to Special Olympics Young Athletes program. "We enjoy the fellowship, the time with the children and families and just being together doing something that is so uplifting and encouraging!" says Bakke.

"We often see groups such as a student council that like to volunteer their time together for special projects or events, and it really helps to have their power in numbers!" says Wendy Eurich, Fox Valley Advisory Board Member. "There is a certain dynamic with people who already have great working relationships and the energy and excitement they create when they come together as a team in serving!"

There are many wonderful group opportunities coming up in the months ahead from helping at one of our special events, such as the 5K Fun Run and Walk in June or our Golf Outing in July. Or if one-on-one is more your speed, we are always looking for passionate people who would like to be trained as a literacy tutor.

Contact Annie Sloka at foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org for more information on how you can help!



A NEW Educational Program is on the Rise!

We are currently developing an exciting MATH program for our children! This program is on track to start in the fall. If you would like to volunteer with this program as a math tutor or creating materials, please contact Genia Latka at glatka@gigisplayhouse.org or Beth Spenadel at bspenadel@wideopenwest.com.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		MAY 2010				1 May Day 2 & under 9:30a-11:00a Literacy 9:30-10:30a
2	3 Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30-1:30p, 4-5:15p	4 Literacy 5:00-5:30p	5 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	6 Literacy 4:00p-5:00p	7 Teen-Tastic 7-9p RSVP 630.778.PLAY	8 Walkers Group 9:30a-10:30a Daddy & Me 3:00p-4:30 p Literacy 9:00-10:30a
9	10 Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30-1:30p, 4-5:15p	11 Literacy 5:00-5:30p Special Olympics Young Athletes 5:45-6:30p	12 Literacy 4:30-6:00p	13 Literacy 4:00-5:00p Wendy's Fundraiser 5:00-8:00p	14	15 Hop, Skip & Jumpers 10:30a-12p RSVP 630.335.4824 Playhouse Pals 2:00-4:00p Literacy 9:30-10:30a
16	17 Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30-1:30p, 4-5:15p	18 Literacy 5:00-5:30p	19 Karate Kickers Ages 8-12, 5:15-5:45p 13+, 6:00-6:30p RSVP 815.436.3817 Literacy 4:30-6:00p	20 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	21 Literacy 1:00-2:00p	22 Literacy 9:30-10:30a
23	24 Tot Class 9:30a-11:00a RSVP 630.778.PLAY Literacy 12:30-1:30p, 4-5:15p	25 Literacy 5:00-5:30p	26 Literacy 4:30-6:00p	27 Literacy 4:00p-5:00p	28 GiGi's Family Night 6:00-8:00p RSVP 630.844.1720	29 Literacy 9:30-10:30a
30 Nuestros Angeles 11:00a-1:00p	31 Memorial Day					

Kate loves challenge!

Kate is constantly challenging her tutor for more material, and she is only 3 years old! She was working on the farm animal unit and correctly identified every single one! Her tutor is delighted with how fast she is learning and is looking for more involved units for Kate all the time!



Open Play

Stop by the Playhouse any Thursday between 12:30-2pm for Open Play! Bring the entire family and meet other families, ask questions and share resources. The kids play together while parents talk and get to know each other. Dianne, who hosts Open Play with her son Brett, says "Open Play is a weekly, informal

get-together for anyone who is involved in the Down syndrome community. We play, socialize, eat pizza and relax. I love having the chance to talk to other parents, get advice, and ask questions. I love also meeting other children with Down syndrome and being in a loving and accepting atmosphere. I remember how nervous I was the first time I came to Open Play, but it is so relaxed and welcoming that now Brett and I host! Kids are running around playing, grown-ups are cooing over babies and there is complete acceptance. "

Faith – Skills Are Growing!

Faith's tutor is so excited about her recent advancements in Literacy! Lauren says that Faith is making great strides tackling material that used to be a huge challenge, she is putting words together to read phrases! Lauren and Faith were a great team this semester!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		MAY 2010				1 May Day
2	3 Meeting 7p	4 Literacy 9:00-10:30a, 1:00-2:30p	5 Literacy 9-9:45a, 3:15-7:15p Special Intentions 7:00-9:00p	6 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 9:30-2:30, 4-7:45p Wendy's Night - corner of Golf & Roselle Rd, 4:00-8:00p	7 Literacy 3:30-6:45pm Family Night 6:30-8:30p	8 Crawlers 9:00-9:45a 2 & Under 10:00-11:30a Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12:30-1:30p Playhouse Pals 2:00-3:30p
9 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11:00a-1:00p	10 Literacy 5:15p-6:15p Meeting 7p	11 Literacy 9:30-10:30a, 1:00-2:30p, 5:00-6:30p	12 Literacy 3:15-7:15p	13 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 4:00-6:15p	14 Literacy 4:00-6:15p	15 Literacy 8:45-10:15a
16	17 Literacy 5:15p-6:15p Meeting 7p	18 Literacy 9:30-10:30a, 1:00-2:30p, 5:00-6:30p	19 Literacy 3:15-7:15p	20 Wendy's Night - corner of Golf & Roselle Rds, 4:00-8:00p Open Play 12:30-2:00p	21 Literacy 4-6:15p	22 Kids Club 10-11:30a
23 Polish Group 10:00-11:30a RSVP to Krystyna at 847.962.4820	24 Literacy 5:15-6p Meeting 7p	25 Literacy 9:30-10:30a, 1-2:30p, 5-6:30p	26 Literacy 3:15-7:15p	27 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 4:30-6:15p	28 Literacy 4:30-6:15p Friday Friends 7p	29
30	31 Memorial Day					

The Circle of Giving...

Many of the McHenry Board members and other volunteers went to help out our Hawgs and Hot Rods sponsor at the Woodstock Harley Davidson's spring Open House. The volunteers served food and raised awareness at the same time, all while raising funds for the Event. Everyone that attended this huge event was genuinely excited to help us out! Thank you Harley Davidson for your continued support, we are looking forward to the Hawgs and Hot Rods-Krusin '4 the Kids on June 6th!



Thanks to Rylee Lewis's Grandpa Terry and all the Employees at DHL Global Forwarding for their continued support. This year DHL employees were able to buy casual days to help raise money for the playhouse.

Sweeney, a nurse from the Sedom program (Special Education District of McHenry County). Thank you for sharing your expertise with us!

The CPR Class that we were able to offer through the McHenry Fire Department was also well attended. All participants received a two year certification upon completing the class. Please continue to check the calendar for upcoming guest speakers.



Ongoing training...

Potty Learning Class was well attended by many of our GiGi's Playhouse families. So many parents were excited about the information that was presented by Carolyn

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		MAY 2010				1 May Day
2 Nuestros 10:00a GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	3 Literacy 4:00-6:00p	4 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Literacy 6:30-7:00p	5 Literacy 4:00-7:00p Show Me A Sign 6:00pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome)	6	7 Literacy 3:00-4:00p Teen Tastics 7:00 p	8 Crawlers 10:15a
9 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	10 Literacy 4:00-6:00p	11 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Wendy's Night 5:00-8:00p Literacy 6:30-7:00p	12 Literacy 4:00-7:00p Evening Open Play 5:00-7:00p	13 Options & Advocacy 10:00a Art Class 4:00p	14 Literacy 3:00-4:00p Kids Club 6:30p	15
16 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	17 Literacy 4:00-6:00p Wendy's Night Crystal Lake 5:00-8:00p	18 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Literacy 6:30-7:00p	19 Literacy 4:00-7:00p Show Me A Sign 6:00pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome)	20	21 Literacy 3:00-4:00p Friday Friends Raymond's Bowl in Johnsburg 6:15-8:30p RSVP 385-7529	22
23 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	24 Literacy 4:00-6:00p	25 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Literacy 6:30-7:00p	26 Literacy 4:00-7:00p Bookmaking 6:30p Evening Open Play 5:00-7:00p	27 Art Class 4:00p	28 Literacy 3:00-4:00p	29
30 Daddy & Me 10:00a GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	31 Memorial Day					



A great time was had by all, including our volunteers from One Brick Chicago, who tended bar and

facilitated Jenga tournaments among the partygoers. We raised money and awareness for both the GiGi's veterans and some new faces. A final congratulations goes out to Jason Alexander (not the one from Seinfeld; yes, he's heard that one before) who took home the custom-made GiGi's Playhouse Game Night Trophy. His name will be added to the tower of Jenga blocks, and we expect him to defend his title next year.



Remember GiGi's Chicago

When you register for this year's 5K (do it today!), don't forget to designate GiGi's Chicago as your home Playhouse (if, in fact, it is your home Playhouse). We're having a friendly competition among the Playhouses to see who can raise the most, and we can't do it without teams. Register, and select GiGi's Chicago as your Playhouse!! Let's win bragging rights!


Jenga. Connect Four. Baggo. Virtual Bowling. It was all there at GiGi's Chicago's Third Annual Game Night. On March 27, we turned the Playhouse over to the adults for an evening of fun, awareness and fundraising. We pushed the toys to the side (and piled them in the closets) to turn the play area into a bean-bag tossing court, and our Literacy Room became a darts pavilion.



Thursday May 6th! Come to Macello's for dinner and 15% of the proceeds will go to the Chicago Playhouse!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		MAY 2010				1 May Day Open Play 9:00-11:00a Hispanic Group 9:00- 11:00a
2	3	4 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	5 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	6 Open Play 11:30a-1:00p	7	8 Playhouse Pals 11:15a-12:45p
9	10	11 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	12 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	13	14	15 Open Play 9:00-11:00a Kids Club 4:00 - 5:30p
16	17	18 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	19 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	20 Open Play 11:30 - 1:00p	21	22 Crawlers 9:00 - 9:45a 2 and Under 10:00 - 11:30a Hop Skip and Jumpers 12:00 - 1:30p
23	24	25 Literacy 3:00-5:00p	26 Literacy 4:00-5:00p	27	28 Movie Night 7:00p	29
30	31 Memorial Day					

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GiGi's Playhouse
Down Syndrome Awareness
5K Fun Run and Walk
Sunday, June 13, 2010

Village Green in Prairie Stone
5336 Prairie Stone Pkwy, Hoffman Est. IL, 60169

Open Registration	7:30-8:30 AM
5K Run Starts	8:45 AM
1 Mile Walk	9:15 AM
Dash for Down Syndrome	Immediately following

Our 7th 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!*

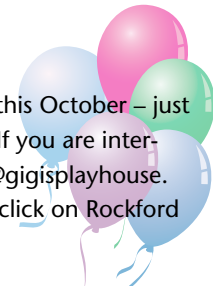
Get your Team Together and Register Today!

The 7th Annual 5K is right around the corner! Get your team together and go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to register! The top 5 teams will get a table, chairs and a tent! This is our biggest event ever and we need you to help us spread awareness! With over 2000 people expected, we are looking for sponsors, runners and walkers! Email 5K@gigisplayhouse.org for more info!



Rockford is Next!

The 7th Playhouse will be opening in Rockford this October – just in time for Down syndrome awareness month! If you are interested in helping this Playhouse email Rockford@gigisplayhouse.org. You can visit www.gigisplayhouse.org and click on Rockford to see events coming up!



Save the Date

May 7

Family Night – Hoffman Playhouse,
6:30pm

May 22

Leaps & Bounds Recital, 2pm @ Eppley
Auditorium — Sioux City

June 6

Hawgs and Hotrods - Woodstock Harley
Davidson — McHenry

June 13

5K — 8:45am

July 22

Fox Valley Annual Golf Outing, Tamarack
Golf Club in Naperville

August 28

Walk for Down syndrome Awareness,
8am-Noon — Sioux City



Hawgs and Hot Rods Krusin' for the kids

June 6th
Woodstock
Harley Davidson!

Please register on-line at
www.gigisplayhouse.org

