



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

June 2011

Newsletter

www.gigisplayhouse.org
info@gigisplayhouse.org

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

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

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

Rockford Location
8801 N 2nd
Machesney Park, IL 61115
815-654-7529

Chicago Location
3948 N Lincoln Ave
Chicago, IL 60613
773.583.PLAY (7529)

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

Des Moines Location
10430 New York Ave
Suite A
Urbandale, IA 50322
515.252.PLAY (7529)

100% Success!

Rarely, can a program boast 100% success rate but the GiGi's Playhouse Math program can do just that! We recently completed our pilot session at the Hoffman and Fox Valley Playhouses and based on the scores and testing – every single student improved! Math is about so much more than addition and subtraction – it's telling time, counting money, fractions, and more! This program teaches these important life skills in a way that ensures success – and the self esteem that the children get is invaluable! To learn more about this program, email info@gigisplayhouse.org.



Making Strides in Literacy!

It's IEP time, and we have heard stories that run the gamut from great experiences to not so great experiences. Here is a recent email we received...

"I was recently pouring over test results and old and new goals as I prepared for Hannah's IEP. IEPs always make me a little nuts as they write out everything our children are not able to do yet.

However I did want to share one part of Hannah's test results. Her reading and word decoding tested at 6 months older than she is. Now keep in mind that was on a typically developing test. So Hannah not only scored well but she scored better than her age!! They highlighted that on the word decoding they gave her word groups that were not real words to see if she would try to sound them out and she did. She knew the sounds and would put them together.

This is all attributed to her Literacy program at GiGi's! Hannah has had wonderful tutors and the program has showed us how to help her at home. I just wanted to say THANK YOU because the program has helped us make great strides!

To learn more about the GiGi's free literacy program, contact your local Playhouse or email info@gigisplayhouse.org.



Changing Perceptions

The Gallery, a 30 foot exhibit with portraits of individuals with Down syndrome featuring quotes in their own words, was displayed at the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicagoland this month. An older man was looking at the Traveling Gallery and smiling. Julie, a friend of the Playhouse, commented, "It's a beautiful display, isn't it?"

"Yes," the man agreed. "Each person is beautiful. I didn't realize so many of their features were so similar."

Julie explained that Down syndrome is a genetic condition and that there are certain characteristics that are common to most individuals with Down syndrome.

The man asked, "Can they learn?"

Julie was taken aback by this question. While her initial response was "of course

they can!", she paused and looked at this man. Clearly, no one had explained to him the abilities of individuals with Down syndrome. Perhaps, he grew up in a generation that didn't believe in the potential of all people with special needs. Julie realized that this conversation was the very reason the Gallery was brought to Willow Creek – to help this man, and the countless others, replace their outdated perceptions with an accurate picture of Down syndrome.

"Yes," she told him, "children with Down syndrome can learn to read, write, drive, work – just about anything you and I can do!"

"Wow, thank you," the man said. "Thank you."

Often, we think we live in a world where acceptance is the norm. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Our mission is still as needed as ever and GiGi's is here to help you create that awareness and acceptance in your community as well as across the world. Please contact ihaveavoicproject@gigisplayhouse.org if you are interested in having the Gallery displayed in your area or call your local Playhouse for ideas on how to spread awareness in your community!



GIGI's Playhouse News

Atlanta

News from Atlanta....

We are beginning the build out of our space and plan to move in July! We will be located in midtown and our address is 549-4 Amsterdam Avenue, in a small shopping area called Amsterdam Way.

Our volunteer data base is building every day and we are actively seeking to hire a Site Coordinator.

If you're in Atlanta on June 1st, please come to Tootsie's for a shopping night that benefits GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta! It promises to be the best girls' night out in a long time! Email Atlanta@gigisplayhouse.org for more info!



Hoffman Estates

Friday Friends - Rock' and Rollin'

Our Jam Session with Rick Renner was great, everyone brought their instruments and we had a blast. The fun continued with Rock, Roll & Smoothies. We loved Game Night with the Wii the fun doesn't stop!

Mark your calendar!
June 24 – BBQ
July 22 – Softball Game
August 26 – our friends at Laser Quest donated the evening for us!



Friday Friends is our fun and active adult group who love to get together, socialize and have fun in a casual environment. We have our own space, Club GiGi, join us!

Kids Club

Are you 9-13? Then Club GiGi is the place to be on Saturday, May 28th! Kids Club will be in the house! Invite a friend and be ready for a blast! We have a youth group joining us so it'll be a huge party. RSVP to hoffmanestates@gigisplayhouse.org. In the midst of all of this fun, Kids Club accomplishes so much....literacy, self-expression, socialization, taking turns, gross and fine motor skills.



GiGi's Cheer Gems are Rockin'!

The new Cheerleading squad at GiGi's has been practicing diligently and is perfecting their routine! They are having

so much fun, they don't even realize that they are working on skill development in so many areas – gross and fine motor, social skills, turn taking, and more! Look for performance dates coming soon!

Sioux City

Transitioning

Whether your child is transitioning from Early Childhood Services into the school setting or from Elementary School to the Middle School or from High School to Year 13 Services and into "life", we have information that you will want to see. The Sioux City Playhouse hosted a seminar on Life Transitions for all Special Needs Parents & will continue to host them. We learned that we all have the same types of questions and go through similar situations. We also learned what questions to ask and items to try to incorporate when working with different school districts and service providers through these transitions; discussing with and helping others makes the 'process' easier. If you are looking for information on Transitions please contact us -we can help!



THANK YOU

"A place to go, a place to be, a place to learn, a place to belong, a place to love" these are words that I use to describe GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux City. Many of you know that my family & I are moving out of the Siouxland area and it has been an absolute treasure to serve as the co-President of GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux City since the beginning. I look forward each day to hearing & talking to so many of you, sharing your experiences and learning from each of you, meeting new families & volunteers, talking to the public about what GiGi's Playhouse is and why we are here. The support from friends, families and businesses shows when you open the doors and this will continue for years to come! It is an honor to introduce the new GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux City Board & Officers to you and to say farewell on Sat, June 4 @ 11:30am with a "Dessert" Potluck! See you then! –Daniell Bargstadt



Rockford

Program Day at GiGi's Playhouse Rockford

Our Program Day takes place once a month on the 3rd Saturday of the month offering parent networking time and activities for Programs including our 2 & under (0-2yr.)9:00a.m., Crawlers (0-2yr.) 10:00a.m., Walkers(1-3yr.) 11:00a.m., Hop, Skip & Jumpers (3-5yr.) 12:00p.m., Playhouse Pals (6-8yr.) and Kids Club (9-12yr.)both combined at 1:00p.m.

Theresa Fischer, Physical Therapist & Board Member, is organizing our volunteer Developmental, Occupational, Speech and Physical Therapists who will volunteer to run helpful therapy oriented activities for our Program Day. The three pictures of kids on our program days are: Nathan Mickey stacking blocks with his mom and Theresa, Cainen Lucas taking a ride on our platform swing and Playhouse Pals having fun on our balance boards.



Des Moines

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

We just had our volunteer appreciation party to thank everyone who has helped us have such a successful first year. We are still in need of more volunteers so we can add new programs and continue to grow. Do you have a couple hours a month you could spare? Do you have a talent you'd like to share? If so, please let us know, we would love to hear from you - email desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org.



Save the Dates:

June 13th - Summer Literacy Session begins and runs for 8 weeks.

July 3rd - Second annual Fourth of July Ice Cream Social from 3-5 pm.

July 10th - "Signing Time" Series begins, weekly on Sundays from 3-4 pm.

August 27th - Buddy Walk in the morning at DMACC in Ankeny followed by Golf Outing at Copper Creek Gold Course in Pleasant Hill, IA. Watch your mail for details!

June 11th at 11 am Gage the Therapy dog will be here!



Check us out on Facebook for updates and fun photos! <http://www.facebook.com/#!/GiGisPlayhouseDesmoines>

Chicago

On May 15, GiGi's Playhouse hosted the feuding houses of Verona – the Capulets and Montagues – for an hour of Shakespeare scene-stealing. Culminating a six-month study, Chicago's teen drama club performed their several scenes to a packed house at the Menomonee Club's Drucker Center (who generously donated their space for the evening.)

The rehearsal process was vigorous. During the month of February, the group pantomimed several scenes, rotating parts amongst the group so they could all learn the story. After uncovering the four character types in the play (lovers, fighters, rulers and confidants), the group also played several improve-based games to discover how they'd move and talk. Guest artists helped the kids learn the play's prologue in sign language and basic stage sword-fighting (a hit with the boys in the group).

After weeks of practice, both at the Playhouse and at home, the performance was on. In an hour-long performance (using an abridged script adapted by Kathryn Yohe and children's author Bruce Coville), the teens played the parts as well as Olivier. Our warmest thanks to our Drama Club volunteers Katie Yohe and Mallory Schuh and all the kids and their parents for devoting their time and energy to a great evening!



McHenry

Cruising Crawlers & Walkers....

Yvonne Maniates says, her daughter Ava, who turns three in July, regularly attends the monthly Crawlers & Walkers Class. This class helps infants and toddlers with their fine and gross motor skills. We have two very knowledgeable and experienced therapists who run the class, Val Schmidt, a licensed Occupational Therapist and Lisa Henning, a licensed Physical Therapist. Combined they offer an invaluable service. They both lead busy lives but they give of their time to help our kids.

Ava took her first step at 18 months and with the help of the regular monthly therapy she receives at the Playhouse, she is making remarkable progress! Val is currently working with Ava on fine tuning her scissor skills. Lisa is helping Ava walk downstairs plus walk sideways with the aid of a balance beam.

We encourage everyone with a young child regardless where they are in their developmental stage to come to the Crawlers & Walkers Class held every second Saturday at 10:15 am at the McHenry Playhouse.

Save the date:

Sunday June 26, 2011

GiGi's Playhouse

McHenry 3rd Annual

Hawgs & Hot Rods

Kruisin' 4 the Kids



Fox Valley

"Math was never my favorite subject, so I was a bit nervous heading in to the training sessions," said Sarah, a GiGi's parent. "After the sessions, I was enthusiastic about trying the techniques at home and in every day life with my son and we're already seeing the benefits in his understanding of math and in his school work! His favorite techniques are M&M charting and pizza fractions."

Genia Latka, Math Program Director, explains that math truly can be something fun to incorporate throughout your child's day and gears her training sessions to have parents and tutors alike feel comfortable teaching the methods. "Our goal is to be a resource for the parents and schools so they can make modifications or adaptations to their existing math program to best suit each student." Latka explains that the program reaches beyond the one-on-one tutoring GiGi's offers, and is a method that incorporates math learning in real-life experiences, "Parents are their child's best teacher!"

If you are interested in learning more, please RSVP to attend our math training sessions this summer on Tuesday June 14, 2011, Tuesday July 12, 2011 and Tuesday Aug 16, 2011 to foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org



Join us at the Cubs Game!

The Cubs Care program is providing tickets to GiGi's Playhouse families!

If you want tickets, go to **www.gigisplayhouse.org** to purchase yours! Hurry, limited amount available!

When: Friday May 27th
1:20pm

Who: Cubs vs. Pirates

Cost: \$5/ticket

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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REGISTER TODAY!

**JUNE 12 • GiGi's Playhouse
8th Annual Chicagoland 5K Run and 1 mile walk!**

Dash for Down syndrome back by popular demand.

Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to register!

Let the competition begin – the top 5 teams will get a tent! Sponsorship and volunteer opportunities available. Email 5K@gigisplayhouse.org

This event takes place at the Arboretum in South Barrington! Meet at Pinstripes!

C'est la Vie! Visit From France!

A group from L'enfant Soleil, a non-profit group in France, came to the Hoffman Estates Playhouse and National Office to see what GiGi's is all about! They were so excited to learn from GiGi's and were impressed with how we opened such an impactful non-profit and turned it into an International Organization! We are so grateful for all of you – families, donors, volunteers – for being part of changing the world with us – 1 diagnosis at a time!



**Be sure to go to www.gigisplayhouse.org
to see your local Playhouse calendar!**

Want to read more inspirational stories? Each Playhouse has a blog and a facebook page with current stories!

