

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

April 2010

Newsletter

Locations

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

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

www.gigisplayhouse.org info@gigisplayhouse.org

Welcoming our new Academic Director!

As you know, GiGi's mission is to spread positive awareness about Down syndrome. Therefore, the focus of our programs is on education. We ensure that each and every program or activity incorporates some aspect of therapy or education and that the children and adults with Down syndrome are learning and developing skills in a variety of areas including speech and language, social

skills, and fine and gross motor skills. Each Playhouse has a plethora of programs ranging in ages from birth through adulthood. The Fox Valley and Hoffman Playhouses are piloting a math program! And McHenry recently began the Phun with Phonics program with their literacy students! Each of our programs are designed with a backbone of skill development and placed into an atmosphere of fun! The kids don't feel like they are learning or getting therapy and their self esteem grows exponentially each time they participate in programming!

We are pleased to introduce our new Academic Director, Courtney Phillips, who comes to us with over 10 years teaching experience!

She will be overseeing all educational and therapeutic programming at the Playhouses! Have a programming idea or question? Email Cphillips@gigisplayhouse.org.



Courtney observed Somer reading her books in the Literacy program and was so impressed! Somer works hard in Literacy, and then celebrates her success in the ball pit when she finishes!



What a connection!



Last fall, Vinny, a graduate student at Roosevelt University, sat in a seminar hosted by GiGi's Playhouse. He fell in love with our mission and vision and decided to complete his volunteer hours at the Playhouse tutoring children in the literacy program. When he heard about the Gallery, he worked with our Voice committee and now the Gallery will be featured at Roosevelt University for the next 2 months! Be sure to stop by and see the impact it's having on passers-by! Interested in hosting it? Email ihaveavoice@gigisplayhouse.org. Look inside for more on Vinny and the Playhouse!

GiGi's Education Center

Our Speech Seminar was a huge help to our families! Read below for some great tips from our Speech Therapist, Lora White!

Strategies and Home Activities to Enhance Speech, Language and Communication in the Young Child with Down Syndrome

- Become aware of your child's communicative attempts. We begin communicating at our first cry at birth. Observe your child's communication, even if it is nonverbal. By responding to the communication, it will increase the young child's desire to interact with the environment, thus providing the young child with more practice.
- 2. Remember to describe, comment, label pictures, activities and household chores. The young brain needs to hear words thousands of times before it can produce the word.
- 3. Use simple language of one or two words if the child is just beginning to speak. Speak slowly and over-articulate the sounds in the words you are using. This allows the young child the opportunity to discriminate the sequence of sounds needed to eventually produce the word. As your child develops speech and language, model language slightly higher than what your child is currently using.
- 4. Play turn-taking games as this is the foundation of conversation. Repetition is a great learning tool for the young child.
- Observe when your child is more responsive/vocal/verbal and increase the time the child is in that activity. It may be when the child is in the car or bathtub, waking up in the morning, etc.
- 6. Give the child time to respond to your interactions. Don't overload the child with too much language/talking to the point they will be unable to maintain attention and become disinterested in staying in communication with you.
- 7. Try not to meet the needs of the child without the child doing something to communicate that want or need. Too often parents become so knowledgeable of their infants needs that they continue to meet the child's needs as the child gets older; not requiring the child to initiate his wants and needs, verbally or nonverbally. Remember, communication development is a skill that requires practice. The more we practice it the better we get!

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.

Q and A with Vinny!

- Q. What do you get out of the experience of being a Literacy tutor at GiGi's?
- A. I never tutored before but I love doing it! Seeing the glow in the kids' eyes when they read a new word or read an entire sentence, seeing that light bulb turn on really got me I'm hooked! This opportunity is helping me build and refine my skills so that I can better understand and help individuals with Down syndrome in the future.
- Q. What are your perceptions of the families you work with?
- A. The parents really enjoy the sessions and love having another perspective. It's great for the parents to see the success firsthand and watch their children make progress. They have often commented that they thought their child had it in them, but just never saw the achievement at home. When they see those achievements at GiGi's it wows them! The parents get the encouragement they need!
- Q. How do you handle the "challenging" moments?
- A. I like to come up with new and interesting ways of presenting material. It's as much up to me as it is the student. It takes two to tango!

I would say these students have a wonderful dance partner in Vinny as they learn to read!

Vinny is donating 72 hours this semester and is tutoring 12 students. Through his dedica-



tion to a cause and unselfish gesture of time, he is making a profound difference in the lives of 12 of our children/young adults. Thanks Vinny!

Sioux City, Iowa



The month of April usually is a great time to get outside & see what changes are taking place. This also is a great time to incorporate color words, family words, & activity words the kids have learned outside of literacy. From my personal experience, Devon enjoys playing "I spy" outside. It is great to have him find the color and object while we are outside. He gets excited when we tell him he has found the "I spy" object! It's also a great way to have our other children incorporate what he has learned at tutoring and they feel as much a part of his learning as my husband and I do.

THANK YOU

for attending our 1 year Anniversary Celebration and making GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux City a HUGE SUCCESS! The community support we receive is much appreciated!

Dress Down for Down Syndrome!

What an easy way to raise money for GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux City! If your business, office or friends are interested in learning about this please contact us today!

Join us for Chick-fil-A Spirit
Night on Thursday, April 15 from
5:30-7:30pm! 10% of your receipt will
be donated to GiGi's Playhouse-Sioux
City! Play the
Chick-fil-A Plinko

BONUS game &

win prizes!

Walk For Awareness

on Saturday, Aug 28! We are looking for volunteers to help plan & execute the Walk! If you are interested in helping in any & all ways please email/call us today! Your talent is needed!



Easter Party FUN!

Join us for our 2nd Annual Easter Egg Hunt at 10am on Fri, April 3! Kids of all ages will participate in hiding & finding eggs, games & crafts! Bring your Friends & Family!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
0	APRIL 2010			1 Literacy 4:30-5:00p	2 Good Friday OPEN PLAY W/ EASTER EGG HUNT 10-11:30a	3 Literacy 9:00a-10:30a
4 Easter Sunday	5	6 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	7 Literacy 5:30-6:00p	8 Literacy 4:30-5:00p	9 OPEN PLAY with PIZZA 6:00-7:30p	10 Literacy 9:00-10:30a Leaps & Bounds 11:45a-12:15p
11	12	13 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p OPEN PLAY 6:00-7:30p	14 Literacy 5:30-6:00p	15 Literacy 4:30p-5:00p Chick-fil-A Spirit Night 5:30-7:30p @ Southern Hills Mall	16	17 Literacy 9:00-10:30a Leaps & Bounds 11:45a-12:15p Teen Tastic 1:00-2:30 p
18	19	20 Literacy 4:30p-6:00p	21 Literacy 5:30-6:00p	22 Literacy 4:30-5:00p	23	24 Literacy 9:00-10:30a Open Play 10:30a-Noon Leaps & Bounds 11:45a-12:15p
25	26 Motivational Monday 6:00p	27 Literacy 4:30-6:00p	28 Literacy 5:30-6:00p	29 Literacy 4:30-5:00p Open Play 9:00-10:30a	30	

Fox Valley

Author Patricia Winders Visits the Fox Valley Playhouse

"It was terrific to have the opportunity to meet Patricia face to face and to see her interact with our children. Having read her

book, it was wonderful to see the heart behind the words!" said one parent in attendance. On February 25th GiGi's Playhouse had the honor of hosting a 'meet and greet' for Patricia Winders, PT and Author of Gross Motor Skills in Children with Down Syndrome: A Guide

for Parents and Professionals following a conference hosted by School District 204 hosted with over 70 local therapists in attendance. Afterwards, Ms. Winders came to the Playhouse to meet some of our children and families and even some of the therapists tagged along to see the Playhouse. "The children were all drawn to Patricia and it was clear from exchanges that she

has years of experience in working with children with Down syndrome. The smiles on the faces of the children were priceless!" said Wendy Eurich, GiGi's Playhouse Fox Valley Program Director. "We were glad that Patricia and the many therapists and

> what we are all about!" Patricia Winders is a world renowned 25-year Down syndrome and physical therapy expert at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, Maryland. She works with children and adults and serves on the NDSS Clinical Advisory

Board and the NDSC Professional Advisory Council.

families could come see

A NEW Educational Program is on the Rise!

We are currently developing an exciting math program for our children! More details will be provided in the next newsletter. If you would like to volunteer to help with this program as a math tutor or creating materials, please contact Genia Latka at glatka@gigipslayhouse.org or Beth Spenadel at bspenadel@wideopenwest.com.

2 & Under Play Group **Welcomes New Families!**

In February, three new families came to the 2 and Under group! We all had a great time hanging out, playing with the kids, and sharing our experiences. Avery and Eli are 1 years old and too cute for words! Plus, we had a new baby boy named Dylan, 4 weeks old, come with his mommy and daddy. It was a great time to be at GiGi's!



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

Hoffman Estates

Kids Club and Roosevelt University Lend a Helping Hand! Join us April 24th!

Playhouse Pals and Hop, Skip and Jumpers – NEW TIME!

Rain, Rain, Go Away! On Saturday, April 10, wear your raincoat and galoshes to the Playhouse! We're making rain shakers, so bring paper towel rolls if you can! Invite a friend! HOP, SKIP & JUMPERS 12:30-1:30PM, PLAYHOUSE PALS 2:00-3:30PM.



Moms Night Out!

Moms, mark your calendar for Thursday, April 15th! Come to the Playhouse at 7pm for an evening of fun with other women. There will be some fun vendors with makeup, jewelry etc. Bring an appetizer or dessert to share, or drinks to share with the group, and bring a friend! RSVP to sara@gigisplayhouse.org Look at the vendors that will be there!

PartyLite, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Stella & Dot jewelry, Beijo Bags (raffle for one purse!)

Wendy's Night – help the Playhouse!

No coupon necessary! Have dinner at the Wendy's on the corner of Golf & Roselle on April 8 or 22, between 4-8pm, and a percentage of the proceeds come back to the Playhouse!

Family Night

Friday, May 7 – Family Night at the Hoffman Playhouse! Join us from 6:30-8:30pm. Meet Brandy and Val, Therapy dogs, hear a story, eat pizza and have fun!

Thank You to all our Wonderful Gala Sponsors!

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
0	APRIL 2010			1 Literacy 4:30p-6:15p Open Play 12:30-2:00p	2 Good Friday Literacy 3:30-6:45p	3 Literacy 8:45-10:15a Breakfast with the Easter Bunny 10:00-11:30a
4 Easter Sunday	5 Meeting 7:00-9:00pm	6 Literacy 9:00-10:30a, 1:00-2:30p Lora White seminar 7:00-9:00p	7 Literacy 9-9:45a, 3:15-7:15p Special Intentions 7:00-9:00p	8 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	Literacy 4:00-6:15pm	10 Crawlers 9:00-9:45a 2 & Under 10:00-11:30a Hop, Skip & Jumpers 12:30-1:30p Playhouse Pals 2:00-3:30p
11 Nuestros Angeles Hispanic Playgroup 11:00a-1:00p	12 Literacy 5:15p-6:00p	13 Literacy 9:30-10:30a, 1:00-2:30p, 5:00-6:30p	14 Literacy 3:15-7:15p	15 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 4:30-6:15p Mom's Night Out	16 Literacy 3:30-6:45p	17 Literacy 8:45-10:15a
18	19 Meeting 7:00-9:00p	20 Literacy 9-10:30a, 1-2:30p	21 Literacy 9-9:45a, 3:15-7:15p	22 Literacy 9:30a-2:30p,4-7:45p Wendy's Night – corner of Golf & Roselle Rds, 4:00-8:00p Open Play 12:30-2:00p	Group noon-4p Literacy 4-6:15p Friday Friends Jam Session 7:00p	24 Group 11:00a-3:00p Kids Club 10-11:30a
25 Polish Group 11:00a-1:00p RSVP to Krystyna at 847.962.4820	26 Literacy 5:15-6p Meeting 7:00-9:00p	27 Literacy 9:30-10:30a, 1-2:30p, 5-6:30p	28 Literacy 3:15-7:15p	29 Open Play 12:30-2:00p Literacy 4:30-6:15p	30 Literacy 4:30-6:15p	

New house! New volunteers! New students!

In less than 1 month, we were able to successfully move our playhouse to our new location. We opened the new Literacy room on Feb. 22 and welcomed new tutors and students! One new tutor, Carley Sorrentino, had just completed the training well prepared but a little nervous and unsure as to what to expect. We gave her our best "you can do it" speech and sent her off. After the first session, I listened as she excitedly relayed the fun she and her new student had and how she was so glad she got involved. The joy in her voice could be felt through the phone. Carley already has plans to incorporate her artistic and creative ideas into future sessions. You never know whose life you might change if given a chance.

Awareness is The Theme!

Board members and volunteers participated in several outreach events. First was the McHenry Expo, which was attended by over



300 people. We had the opportunity to talk to so many families and businesses during this event. Our local McHenry East High School

held a Diversity Night and invited us to set up a booth and share what GiGi's offers to our community. We also participated in the McHenry County Transition Fair focusing on students ages 14 to 22. This event was a great opportunity to talk with students with special needs, teachers and parents about what GiGi's has to offer. Many teens are interested in joining our Teen Tactics and Friday Friends groups and others are excited about volunteering. Community knowledge is growing we are proud to be a part of it. We are committed to continuing to spread awareness!

Thank you, Thank you

to the McHenry and Woodstock Harley Davidson's for allowing us to educate the community about Down syndrome and what GiGi's Playhouse has to offer! A special thank you to the McHenry Moose Lodge for letting us participate in their Monday night Bingo, a fun time was had by all!

Educator and Therapist Open House

April 8th from 4:00 to 8:00pm

We are the best advocates to surround a child; let's get together parents, educators and therapist, as a team advocating for the children! Come to the McHenry Playhouse and learn about some of the ways a child with Down syndrome learns to read and hear about the educational, recreational and therapeutic programs we have to offer.

Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers willing to help with program development. We would like to add more educational & therapeutic programs at the McHenry Playhouse. If you are interested please contact lean at 815-385-PLAY.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
0	APRIL 2010			1 Art Class 4:00p	2 Good Friday Literacy 3:00-4:00p	3
4 Easter Sunday	5 Literacy 4:00-6:00p	6 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Literacy 6:00-7:30p	7 Show Me A Sign 6:00pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome) Literacy 4:00-7:00p	8 Options & Advocacy 10:00a Educator and Therapist open house 4:00-8:00p	Literacy 3:00-4:00p Teen Tastics 7:00 p	10 Crawlers 10:15a-11:00a
11 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	12 Literacy 4:00-6:00p	Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Wendy's Night 5:00-8:00p Literacy 6:00-7:30p	14 Literacy 4:00-7:00p	15 Art Class 4:00p	16 Literacy 3:00-4:00p Kids Club 6:30p	17
18 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics	Literacy 4:00-6:00p Wendy's Night – Crystal Lake, 5:00- 8:00p	20 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Literacy 6:00-7:30p	21 Literacy 4:00-7:00p Show Me A Sign 6:00pm (basic signing class, all ages welcome)	22	23 Literacy 3:00-4:00p Friday Friends 7:00p	24 GRAND RE-OPENING 12:00-4:00p Games, food, raffles, balloonist, Fire Dept. Ribbon Cutting at 1:00p 5404 W. Elm Street (Route 120)
25 GiGi's Cheer 4:15p at Layton Athletics Daddy & Me 10:00a-12:00p Firehouse Gym, siblings welcome please RSVP (815)385-7529	26 Literacy 4:00-6:00p	27 Open Play 10:00a-12:00p come join us for Pizza & Friendship Literacy 6:00-7:30p	28 Literacy 4:00-7:00p Bookmaking 6:30pm	29 Art Class 4:00p	30 Literacy 3:00-4:00p	

Chicago



On February 17, GiGi's Playhouse Chicago hosted its first Provider Open House show-casing what we have to offer for families and children with Down syndrome. Parents, educators and therapists came to learn about our Literacy Program, as well as the other playgroups and resources we offer to help children with Down syndrome learn both in the classroom and at

home. Everyone – including those already involved with the Playhouse -- walked away with a better understanding of the Playhouse and what it offers, whether that is how our Literacy Program works or modifications in the classroom to help their students (and children) learn.

Missed that one? Don't worry. The Chicago Playhouse will be hosting another Provider Open House in September.

Hop, Skip & Jumpers

Come join us for Hop, Skip & Jumpers on the 4th Saturday of every month. This program is geared for children 3 to 5 years of age. We begin in circle time with a greeting song and stay in circle time for a rhyme or motion song such as "If you're happy and you know it". Then we may play a game of Simon Says or do a craft. Freeze Dance is always a hit. We also incorporate a snack and free play. Come join the fun!



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

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Put Your Best Foot Forward!

Be sure to mark your calendars for June 13th at 9am! The 7th 5K Run and 1 Mile Walk will be an event to remember! The Kids Dash for Down Syndrome is back by popular demand! We are in need of committee members, volunteers day of, sponsors and of course...runners and walkers! Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to register your team!

****You can register as a team, as an individual or join another team! There will be prizes for the top 5 teams again this year so get a head start by setting up your team page today! Go to the website to donate to a team or sponsor the event! Get your team together and put your best foot forward for Down syndrome!****

Fruit of the Spirit Benefit Luncheon

Supporting GiGi's Playhouse Hoffman Estates Special quests: Nancy Gianni and Shauna Niequist

April 24, 11am at Meridian Banquets in Rolling Meadows By reservation only, tickets and information available at www.fruitofthespiritluncheon.com or call 312.865.2436



Fox Valley Annual Golf Outing: July 22, 2010 @ **Tamarack Golf Club in Naperville**

Save the Date

April 3

Breakfast with the Easter Bunny — Hoffman Playhouse, 10-11:30 am

April 6

Speech and Communication Seminar — Hoffman Playhouse 7-9 pm

8 lingA

Educator & Therapist Open House – McHenry, 4-8pm

April 15

Chick-fil-A Spirit Night — SIOUX CITY, 5:30-7:30pm

April 24

Re-Grand Opening — McHenry, 12:00-4:00pm Fruit of the Spirit Luncheon — Meridian Banquets, 11:00am

May 7

Family Night - Hoffman Playhouse, 6:30-8:30 pm Meet Brandy and Val, Therapy dogs, hear a story, eat pizza and have fun!

June 6

Hawgs and Hotrods - Woodstock Harley Davidson — McHenry

lune 13

5K — 9:00am