



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

December 2011

Newsletter

www.gigisplayhouse.org
info@gigisplayhouse.org

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

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

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

Rockford
8801 N 2nd Machesney Park, IL 61115
815.654.PLAY (7529)

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

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

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

Atlanta
549-4 Amsterdam Ave.
Atlanta, GA 30306
866.946.PLAY (7529)

Quad Cities
3906 38th Ave Moline, IL 61265
309.762.PLAY (7529)

Coming soon:
New York, NY
Mexico

A Message from GiGi and the National Office...

DEAR FRIENDS,
THANK YOU FOR GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE.
I LEARN TO READ, DO MATH, CHEERLEADING,
MEET NEW FRIENDS AND PLAY.
Jessica is my BFF!
LOVE
GiGi



What she didn't write here (but would have if I let her!) are the things that she tells me everyday, "I want to be a teenager, I want my license, I want to go to college, I want a job". She watches all of her favorite Disney stars

progress in life and she wants to be on that same path. She gives 100% to everything she does, but no matter how hard she tries she will still be judged by people because she wears her diagnosis on her face. Did you know that 3 out of 4 kids with special needs will be bullied? The worst part is 80% of people will stand by and let it happen. Yes, 80% (www.cnn.com). What is GiGi's doing to change this? Our national awareness campaigns and our educational programming are a catalyst for change by giving a voice to our kids, our siblings, our families, and or communities, which in turn will give a voice to anyone with a disability.

We are able to do all of these things because of people like you who support the Playhouse. Building the infrastructure to support such growth has been a challenge but our 2012 plan is full of initiatives, projects and deliverables that will ensure our success and the success of our many Playhouses to come! With that comes the

success of the children and families served by the Playhouses.

Down syndrome is the largest chromosomal disorder, yet we are the least funded. By helping individuals with Down syndrome reach their potential, we are laying the ground work for acceptance – not only for our kids but for everyone. One Playhouse, one community, one child at a time. Thank you for helping us make this happen!

Over a million people across the country have viewed the i have a voice Traveling Gallery.

- + **Thousands of kids** with Down syndrome are participating in our educational programs.
- + **Hundreds** of siblings are joining forces to show the world the potential in their sibling.
- + **Multiple** GiGi's billboards are up around the country eradicating stereotypes.
- + **THREE** new Playhouses opened around the country this year.
- + **The FIRST** International Playhouse is getting ready to open in Mexico.

Equals=

An **INFINITE** number of perceptions changed, kids being educated, communities and countries opening their hearts and minds, kids with Down syndrome being included and a better world for us all!

Read on to learn how your local GiGi's Playhouse is changing lives daily in your community!

Welcome to GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities!

On behalf of the Quad Cities Board of Directors, we are proud to be the 8th member of the GiGi's Playhouse family. Most of us on the Board have children using the services and programs provided by GiGi's. GiGi's Playhouse is truly a passion for us! We worked hard after signing our Operating Agreement in July 2011 to renovate our storefront to a GiGi's Playhouse by October 1st, 2011.

That is not to say we are doing this alone. Other GiGi's Playhouses, especially the National Office at Hoffman Estates, have given us countless hours of support in the form of advice, programming materials, free legal service and software programs to name a few. We have received tremendous support from the Quad Cities community as well. There are numerous examples of how we have been embraced by our local community. At our *Walking on the UpSide of Down Syndrome* on October 1st, we had over 1000 participants, raising over \$25,000. On that same day, the Chamber of Commerce and the mayor of East Moline (one of

the Quad Cities) participated in our Grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony. We have been selected by numerous local organizations as their quarterly or yearly target charity for monetary donations. Our GiGi's Playhouse has twice been featured on local newscasts. And, we have plenty of volunteers to help us launch our various programs.

Most importantly, I am proud to say we have started programs for all ages from children 2 & under all the way up to adult with Friday Friends. These programs for every age group are being held at a minimum of once per month. In addition, we have had special events such as a Halloween party and a ice cream social on National Down Syndrome Awareness Day. The bottom line is we are having a ball! But, we are just getting started! We have big plans for next year starting with Literacy programming in January. So stay tuned!



GIGI's Playhouse News

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

At GiGi's Playhouse, volunteers are at the heart of what we do! This month we would like to introduce you to volunteer, Katie Bondi. Katie is a senior at Augustana College and will graduate in May 2012 with a degree in Psychology. Katie comes to the Quad Cities Playhouse following an internship with GiGi's Playhouse, Inc., from May-August 2011 and we are taking full advantage of the extensive experience and knowledge she gained from working at the National Office. During her time as an intern Katie states that she, "Fell in love with GiGi's Playhouse" and was so excited to know that she could continue her relationship with GiGi's when she returned to college in the Quad Cities.

Upon returning to college this fall, Katie was instrumental in gaining the support of her sorority, Sigma Pi Delta, who have selected GiGi's Playhouse QC as their yearly philanthropy project. In addition to raising funds for our Playhouse, they also provide activities for the kids during our Open Play programs and various holiday parties.

Thank you, Katie, and all of our wonderful volunteers who devote your time and hearts to GiGi's Playhouse. We appreciate all that you do!

Interested in volunteering? Contact us at the Playhouse at quadcities@gigisplayhouse.org or 309-762-7529! We will have many more volunteer needs in 2012!



A Heartfelt Thanks....

to our Quad Cities community and all who helped make GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities a reality. From the parents, grandparents, and friends who constructed walls, stages, and benches to the numerous volunteers who donated their time to paint the walls and clean - we could not have done it without you! Because of the generosity and support of each and every one of you, our empty storefront came to life as GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities in a mere 2 1/2 months!

With that said, our mission here is only just beginning. In order to continue to offer free services to individuals with Down syndrome and their families, we need your ongoing support. A donation of \$100 will sponsor a child in literacy for one year, a donation of \$500 will help launch our Fine Motor Program, or a donation of \$1000 will purchase games and materials to launch our Math program.

We have accomplished a great deal, but there is so much more to be done. With your help, GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities will continue spread awareness of the potential of individuals with Down syndrome in our community. Become a bird or leaf, or 'carve' your name into our beautiful donor tree today and know that you have made a difference in the lives of these amazing individuals who just happen to have Down syndrome.



GIGI's Playhouse News

Keeping busy at GiGi's....

Since our October 1st grand opening we have been able to offer programs for all ages at GiGi's Playhouse. Parents and children in the 0-2 year old play group have enjoyed getting to know one another. Everyone loves to look through the playhouse and see all of the busy babies and toddlers! Our Hop, Skip and Jumpers (ages 3-5) is a very active group. They like to paint, read stories and learn about colors. Playhouse Pals (ages 6-8) and Kids Club (ages 9-12) have had fun working together on crafts and games. Our "Teen Tastic" teens and Friday Friends have had a blast playing the Wii and dancing to karaoke. The playhouse has been full of smiles, laughter, and FUN!

At GiGi's Playhouse we are committed to offering quality programs for all of our friends to enjoy and will be adding some new programs. Our goal is to start a literacy program by the new year. We are also hoping to add a fitness program and a sibling group soon. After the new year we would like to add a fine motor group and a drama class. We have had several people ask about a math program...we hope to start Math next summer or fall.

We REALLY appreciate all of our talented volunteers and those who have donated items and money to support GiGi's. It is very heartwarming to live in a community that supports our mission. Please check our website for a calendar of programs and upcoming events. If you haven't had a chance yet to participate in one of GiGi's programs, we hope to see you soon!

John and Kate - GiGi's Playhouse QC Board Members and Self Advocates

GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities would like to introduce you to two of our Board Members and Self Advocates, John Garlock and Kate Holsen.

John is 21 years old and is completing his final year at Rock Island High School where he was elected Homecoming King in 2008. He also works 4 days a week at HyVee as a grocery clerk. John loves his family and is very proud to have become an uncle this year!

Kate is 23 years old and is employed at the Rock Island Arsenal. She attended Elmhurst College and is also an accomplished singer! In addition to singing the National Anthem at our local DS awareness walks for the past several years, she earned a part in the chorus of last year's Music Guild production of White Christmas.

We look forward to sharing the continued successes of these two wonderful individuals. They have big plans for GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities, so stay tuned.....



GiGi's Playhouse
3906 38th Ave
Moline, IL 61265

WOW!

Check out our NEW local newsletters!
Look inside to see how far your local
Playhouse has come and how you can
help continue changing lives!

**2012 calendars
are here!** Give
a gift of love and
acceptance and
help us change
the way people see our kids!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

You are invited!

one night. nine cities. two countries. your voice.
save the date!

The 2nd Annual

have **i** voice

International Gala

Saturday, February 25, 2012

GiGi's
PLAYHOUSE

Down Syndrome Awareness Centers



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www.gigisplayhouse.org

Venues in:

Chicago

Sioux City

New York

Quad Cities

Des Moines

Twin Cities

Rockford

Atlanta

Querétaro, Mexico

*The honor of
your presence is
requested*

February 25, 2012

The Outing Club

2109dy Street

Davenport, IA 52803

Register today!

www.events.org/

ihaveavoicquaddcities

Black tie with a rockin' edge!

*Celebrate Down syndrome,
GiGi's style!*

Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to register!