



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

July 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)

To be or Not to be!



At the Chicago Playhouse, it's clear that the Drama club is the place to be! After a successful season, which wrapped up in a stellar performance of Shakespeare, they decided to create feature films with each drama club participant this summer! This summer, they decided to create feature films with each drama club participant! Each student will create their very own documentary starring... themselves! Through improvisational games and creative writing exercises, each of the teens will develop a short (1-2minute) screenplay. At the end of the summer, the finished films will be screened at the Landmark Cinema in Chicago! ABC Channel 7 will be coming out this month to see this club in action - stay tuned for info on when to watch.



As with all programs at GiGi's, these films have an underlying theme of self-esteem. As each child shows off his or her talents,

passions, and abilities, they are gaining self confidence! So are their parents and siblings as well! The Drama club is a platform of pride for each child to stand. As they take that pride out into the community and show their abilities at school and in the workplace, they are able to eradicate the out-dated stereotypes that still perpetuate our world.

20 month old Inspires Thousands!



Wow, what an event! The regional Chicagoland 5K event was huge! It brought in over 2,000 people! All funds raised will go towards the free educational programs at the Playhouses!

Here is a story from one of our top fundraising teams, Team Maxton!

I was always told there is nothing you cannot do if you put your mind and effort into it. Growing up in Iowa, we were very self sufficient and literally had to do everything. What I could not do is change our diagnosis when Maxton was born. As difficult as that was to accept, I eventually did over time. What I have found I CAN do, is work with some incredible people and do everything that we can to make our kids' future as bright as we originally had anticipated.



Max is only 20 months old, and last year was our first 5K. It gave me hope when we were going through a rough time (medically with Max), and kind of just lifted the cloud a bit for us to see the light. I

absolutely loved the participation, the creativity and the fact that it was for something so big for the

kids. I told my wife that we would be participating and getting involved in a big way for the 2011 5K—although I really don't think she understood to what degree—and here we are. Its a promise I gave Max and all the hard work is paying off. It is really incredible to see the support we have gotten and I cannot wait to hear stories from other people!

What would you say to people about why they should get involved with or support the 5K and Team Maxton?

To me it is very simple— You will have fun (even if the actual running hurts), you will meet some incredible people and learn about something new and you will

have a slightly different perception on life. That's how powerful I think this thing is... The 2011 Team Maxton set the bar pretty high for future 5K's in our inaugural appearance, but we will be there with the masses and doing a good thing for people who need that little bit of hope!!

Both Iowa Playhouses have their Walk events coming up – be sure to check their calendar for dates and times and to register!

Go to www.gigisplayhouse.org to see pictures of the event and our amazing sponsors!

Congrats to the Top 6 teams!

- #1. Team GiGi
- #2. Team Maxton
- #3. Team Tera
- #4. Bridgets Buddies
- #5. Caleb & Company
- #6. Team Jade



GIGI's Playhouse News

McHENRY

1st Annual Golf Outing...As the golfers walked to their assigned carts they nervously glanced to the solid overcast sky that periodically sprinkled them with rain. But those golfers of little faith did not know that Jean Boyle and her team that organized GiGi's Playhouse McHenry's First Annual Golf Outing were not to be messed with. The sun broke through and this was going to be a very, very beautiful afternoon of golf.

And beautiful it was, but not just due to the weather. The beauty was in the spirit and enthusiasm among all the golfers. The fact that it was a scramble made it enjoyable even for those less-than-proficient golfers. At every hole there was something fun to do - closest to the pin, longest drive, longest put, you could even pay a little extra to be allowed to hit from the woman's tee on one hole. After golf there was a delicious dinner and a presentation about GiGi's Playhouse.

92 golfers were part of this inaugural effort which was a great tribute to the team that organized the event and to GiGi's Playhouse. Everyone commented on how much fun was had and requested that they be included in what will surely be an even more outstanding outing next year.



FOX VALLEY

Adrianna is just a year old, but she has touched the hearts of so many in that time. Over 100 motorcyclists from "Unknown Few" donated the proceeds from a charity ride "Miles for Smiles" to GiGi's Playhouse Fox Valley in her honor.

As an unofficial member of the motorcycle club, Adrianna has been able to help raise awareness about Down syndrome simply by being the charming person that she is. "She is so loving and so affectionate that people are drawn to her immediately!" says her Mother, Diane.

Unknown Few Club Organizer, Randy Graves shares "When we heard about GiGi's, and what your organization does for individuals with Down syndrome, we decided to learn more...the more we learned, the more we knew this was a cause we wanted to get behind and support!"

The motorcycle run was held May 22 and the all-day event brought in nearly \$2,000 in support of GiGi's educational programs. Thank you to the "Unknown Few" of Illinois!



DES MOINES

Join us at the Festival!

The Italian American Heritage Festival of Iowa is pleased to announce that a portion of this year's gate proceeds will be donated to GiGi's Playhouse in Des Moines, Iowa. The festival will be on the Court Avenue Bridge on July 29th & 30th. We'd love to see all of our GiGi Families there enjoying some great food and music!

Signing Times!

Signing Time Classes start Sunday, July 10th and run for 16 weeks. They will be every Sunday from 3 - 4 pm. There will be a new theme each week - Everyone is invited!



New Parents Group!

Our New Parents Group is growing! We have several new babies - all so beautiful! The group meets the second Saturday each month at 9:00 am.

Language Group!

Anne Fessler is a speech pathologist for Des Moines Public Schools, she is volunteering at our location and will have a Language Group - facilitating speech and social Skills for all ages. Everyone is welcome. We will have it the first Monday of every month from 4 - 5 pm. However, due to the 4th of July Holiday, our first one will actually be on Tuesday, the 5th of July.

ROCKFORD

Sometimes.....it only takes one guy volunteering his time, dedicating himself to a great cause to make some fun things happen! Dave Bailey, came to the Playhouse every night after work to help with the electrical build out of GiGi's Playhouse Rockford and he started to think about what can he do for GiGi's beyond electricity. He loves racing and works with others on a local race car....aha... great awareness for GiGi's Playhouse Rockford! Let's put the name of GiGi's Playhouse on a very sharp yellow Rockford race car! As shown in the picture, Dave and his buddies brought the car over to our Teen Tastics and Friday Friends outing, Cars, Cookout and Country on May 21st - oh what fun!

The story of Dave Bailey does not end there..... he brought everyone from GiGi's Playhouse to the race track - free entrance, free drink and a hot dog for family and friends of GiGi's Playhouse Rockford! 139 people went to the Rockford Speedway and a good time was had by all on June 4th! AND our own Teen Tastic, 14 year old, Julia Berlage sang the national anthem to begin the evening!

Thanks Dave Bailey, Rockford Speedway, Kar Korner and Hal's Plumbing. Sometimes..... it's the simple things that mean so much!



GIGI's Playhouse News

Hoffman

4th of July!

Come show your support at the Hoffman Estates 4 of July Parade. July 4th at 9am. Wear your GiGi's gear and help spread awareness. Please contact the Playhouse at hoffmanestates@gigisplayhouse.org for more info and to rsvp.



I had been tutoring Diana for a couple of sessions and noticed she was really doing well and was past the phonics lessons that she already had. I asked her what she likes to read, and she said mystery novels like «Goose Bumps» and J-14 magazine. Mom was worried that Diana was only looking at the pictures in the magazine and not really reading it. So I said bring it to the next session and we'll find out. Boy was mom ever impressed!! Diana wasn't just looking at the pictures she was actually reading the articles that went with them. She could tell who was dating who, what shows they were on and much more. So from that point on I've encouraged her to bring the magazine, she picks the article she wants to read and we go to town. Diana has problems with reading contraction. By reading the magazine, I was able to identify some areas that we can improve on such as contractions – we have been working on those for a few weeks and already is making great progress!

Keep up the good work Diana, Your tutor Tom

Chicago

It's a whole new Playhouse!

In early June an army of volunteers from Comcast (led by Rich Baudo, a sales manager for Comcast and father of Parker, a 16-month-old with Down syndrome) set about renovating and repainting the Chicago Playhouse. The group added color to our previously drab white walls, replaced the bathroom fixtures, added borders to all our chalkboards (no more accidental writing on the walls) and added more shelving and storage to our main room and office area.

We've also moved the furniture around, adding more room to the space and making room for a new television set, DVD player and music center. This effort, completed during the first weekend of June, gives our playhouse more fun and functionality as we gear up for new programs in the fall. Words cannot express our thanks to Rich, Comcast Cares, Frank Mullaghy and FH Paschen (which donated materials and manpower) and Jodi Fullmer at Benjamin Moore (who donated the paint).



QUAD CITIES

GiGi's Playhouse is coming to the Quad Cities, IL/IA and will be open for programming early this fall!

We have found a wonderful location at 3906 38th Avenue, Moline, IL, and are anxious to bring it to life! If you would like more information about Gigi's Playhouse Quad Cities, are interesting in volunteer opportunities, or would like to donate to our Playhouse, please contact us at quadcities@gigisplayhouse.org.



Sioux City

The Stars of Summer Literacy are Shining Bright!

The 2nd annual Literacy Celebration was a huge success with the theme being centered around the "Stars of the Literacy Program!" Each child who participated in tutoring received an award and a pair of star-shaped sunglasses as well as a star-shaped helium balloon to take home! They were all very excited to be the "stars of the show," and look forward to many more tutoring sessions at the playhouse. We have also had lots of fun at our Summer Literacy Camps. Join us on July 11, 2011 from 9:30-11 am for some fun, literacy-rich activities at the Sioux City GiGi's Playhouse! All ages are welcome!



GiGi's Playhouse in Sioux City, Iowa is in their second year of the literacy program and it is proving to be a worthwhile program for many families. If you are interested in being a tutor or want to get your child involved in literacy tutoring, please email Jenni at: literacysc@gigisplayhouse.org

Register NOW for the...GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Awareness Walk!

When: Saturday, Aug 27, 2011 (8:30-12:00pm)

Where: Chris Larson Shelter & Park, Sioux City Iowa

Registrations are due by Aug. 10th. The cost is \$15 per walker and includes t-shirt, activities and refreshments. Pre-registration by Aug. 10th guarantees your t-shirt size availability. All funds raised support GiGi's Playhouse Down syndrome Awareness Center! For information on how to register please email: eventsc@gigisplayhouse.org (Subject: Walk Registration)

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!



GiGi's on Facebook!

Be sure to check out your local GiGi's Facebook page as well as join the GiGi's Inc. page to keep up to date with activities, programs and awareness events!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



GiGi's at NDSC!

GiGi's Playhouse will have a booth and be speaking at the NDSC conference this year in San Antonio! Be sure to stop by and see us! August 5-7, 2011

Did you know?

That our Playhouses are run on the heart of volunteers? We can always use your help! Call your local Playhouse to see how you can get involved today!

GiGi's has billboards all across Chicago and soon in Des Moines, IA! What great awareness!



Thank you Metamorphosis Photography!

GiGi's Viral!

Here is an excerpt from an email we received recently through our website....

"Our daughter was born with Down syndrome and we were referred to you. Your website helped us better understand Down syndrome and gave us hope when the medical staff had none. Thank you GiGi's!"

Because of donors, volunteers, and people like you – we are able to reach families across the world!

Thanks for your support!



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!