



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

May 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)



## Viva La Mexico!

When Malena first heard about GiGi's Playhouse, she knew it was something that her community in Mexico needed.

Being in a different country and not knowing anything about running a business, she let the idea pass. But it kept coming back to her and she knew that she needed to do something about it! So she emailed Jenni at the National Office for information. Malena explains why she took action...

*"It's funny I was thinking about this project and sometimes I get afraid (how am I going to get the money, how do I start, what should I tell to people, etc.) but in my heart I know I have to do it, then your email comes... so I will continue and start calling friends, I have to take the first step."*

After that day, she had her first informational meeting and over 50 people showed up! Since then, they have gotten government approval to become a legal entity and will be our 1st international Playhouse! Find them on Facebook and 'like' them! Know of a way to help them get started? Email [mexicoQRO@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:mexicoQRO@gigisplayhouse.org).



*¡Estamos abriendo un GiGi's Playhouse en México! ¿Te gustaría involucrarte? Escribe a esta dirección de correo electrónico para obtener más información [mexicoQRO@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:mexicoQRO@gigisplayhouse.org)!*

## From Awareness to Action

Children with special needs are 2-3 times more likely to be bullied. 85% of witnesses do not intervene. (www.cnn.com) For children with Down syndrome, it is even more prevalent. They wear their diagnosis on their face which means they are judged just by how they look. That is why GiGi's is committed to spreading awareness about the incredible potential of all individuals with Down syndrome.

Down syndrome awareness is our mantra, but it's not a passive awareness – it's an active awareness! Belief in our mission and in our kids is important and GiGi's wants to empower you to help others believe!

GiGi's has banners, awareness posters, activity books for school aged children, presentation materials and so much more. It's all here for YOU to use. We have videos about Down syndrome, even sharing it from the perspective of the siblings! It's a great tool to use with your kids to help them be part of the 15% that DOES stand up to bullies! Our Traveling Gallery is created for you to display in your communities. The Playhouse is a resource for you to take advantage of – we have to take action together!

You don't have to open a Playhouse to make a difference. Simply giving your doctors a GiGi's calendar, or giving your school principal and teachers a personalized Just Like You poster, or finding a place to display the Traveling Gallery is a great way to spread awareness!

This is our call to action! Contact your local Playhouse and ask how you can help with turning your awareness into action!



**Awareness Calendars are FREE of charge for you to give out to hospitals, schools and more!!**

Email [info@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:info@gigisplayhouse.org) for yours!



# GIGI's Playhouse News

## Chicago

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou? At the Chicago Playhouse, that's where. Our teen drama club is busy rehearsing scenes from Shakespeare's classic (including the balcony scene), with an eye toward a mid-May performance (location TBD). In preparation, the group is touring the Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier in mid-May to see what it's like to be backstage in a real, functioning theater (including sets and costumes from the company's production of R&J last fall).



Speaking of sets and costumes, if you or anyone you know is interested in helping out with preparations for the group's mid-May performance (sewing/preparing costumes, creating, painting sets, securing props), drop us a line at [Chicago@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:Chicago@gigisplayhouse.org).

Check our Facebook Page and online Calendar for updates for our performance date and time.



### Save the dates

**May 21.** Game Night, 7:30 – 11 p.m., Belle Plaine Studio, 2014 W. Belle Plaine, Chicago, 60618

**May 27,** Summer Literacy Applications due.

## Des Moines

### Literacy

Our Summer Literacy session will start the second week of June and run for 8 weeks. If your child would like to be one of our summer learners please contact us at [desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org) or at 515-252-7529 and we will get you signed up. On the flip side of that - if you are interested in being a literacy tutor, we'd love to have your help. It is a weekly, one-hour commitment. Miracles happen every day at our playhouse and teaching a child to read and seeing the pride on his or her face is something you'll never forget!

### Playhouse Pals

Our children ages 6-8 LOVE coming to Playhouse Pals. It is a mix of typically developed peers and children with Down syndrome. This group promotes friendships, social skills and interactive play through structured and educational activities. Join us on May 7th from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. This month's Playhouse Pals will be hosted by RAK (Random Acts of Kindness) from Waukee High School.

### SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, May 22nd at 5:00 pm. 1 year anniversary and volunteer appreciation BBQ at GiGi's Des Moines!



## Hoffman Estates

### Amazing Saturdays!

Our Crawlers Group meets on a monthly basis, from 9-9:45am. It is led by a Physical Therapist and local gymnastics teacher, and parents work with their child under supervision and are given ideas to try at home. Siblings are welcome and encouraged to attend - they can be great motivators for their brother or sister and are taught things to work on at home as well! For kids who are not crawling yet, they would work on the muscles that are not being used to help get the child crawling. They can help with muscle strength and development for kids who are just beginning to crawl or take first steps. Immediately following Crawlers is our 2 & Under group! Bring the family for a fun morning! Play, relax, and talk with other families.



### Kids Club - more than just fun!

Kids Club is all about fun - from gymnastics to a Kids Club 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. Kids 9-12 years old - invite a friend to join us!



### Hoffman started a cheerleading squad!

Look for info on the Hoffman webpage!

## McHenry

### Jamming with Friends

The McHenry Friday Friends group always has a good time together, Brenna said "no matter what we do we have fun!" As a group we try to come up with new ideas to do each month either at the Playhouse or out in the community. This month we hung out at the Playhouse, made bird feeders for spring, ate pizza and did some dancing and karaoke. We talked about our Spring Dance we will be having on May 6th. We have invited the Friday Friends groups from Hoffman Estates and Rockford to join us for some dancing and refreshments. Friday Friends is a great opportunity for the adults at GiGi's to come together to socialize and create lifelong friendships! If you are 18 or older please come join our group, we promise you it will fun, full of energy and something you will look forward to month after month!



### Save the date:

Sunday June 26, 2011  
GiGi's Playhouse McHenry 3rd Annual  
Hawks & Hot Rods Krusin' 4 the Kids

# GIGI's Playhouse News

## Math News

Our math program has been up and running since this February and we have seen some great improvements in our students' understanding of math concepts! We will be running our Summer session beginning May 30.

If you are interested in registering your child please visit or contact our Fox Valley or Hoffman Estates location for a registration form. All forms need to be returned to the playhouse by MONDAY MAY 9th. Currently there are only 10 spots available for tutoring. If you do not make it into the summer session you will be placed on a waitlist for the fall session.

If you are new to the program please be sure to participate in our Parent/Tutor training sessions that will be held this summer. There you will learn all the techniques and methods we will use to teach your child math. We will also provide helpful, fun everyday math activities for you to do at home. It is very important that what we do during our sessions be continued at home. You are your child's best teacher!

If you are a teacher or parent and are interested in assisting with this program please call or email Annie Sloka (Fox Valley GiGi's Playhouse) foxvalley@gigisplayhouse.org or Sarah VanDahm (Hoffman Estates GiGi's playhouse) svandahm@gigisplayhouse.org.

Hope to spend this summer strengthening your math skills!  
Training Dates: June 14 7-9, July 12 7 -9, August 16 7-9



## Rockford

### Friday Friends... Making Friends and Going Strong in Rockford

The Friday Friends (18yrs. and up) Program is held once a month on the 3rd Friday Night of the month here at the Rockford Playhouse. We are getting rave reviews from those enjoying their evening together as they meet new friends and get acquainted again with old friends.

The Friday Friends program has taken place 4 times in this new playhouse. April brought an Easter Party sponsored by Starbucks, Machesney Park, IL. All in all people are just enjoying their new hangout, they sing karaoke, play the piano, foosball, Wii, computer games and board games.

Thanks to Gerry's Pizza too, they are also talking over pop and pizza.

Check out pictures of our 20+ Friday Friends on Facebook at GiGi's Playhouse Rockford or check out our programming on [www.gigisplayhouse.org/location-rockford.asp](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org/location-rockford.asp).



Friday Friends filled our floor as they tried out Just Dance 2 on the Wii Game System

## Fox Valley

### What does Family Night Mean to You?

"I'll never forget walking in to GiGi's Playhouse and experiencing that welcoming atmosphere...seeing the children interact and play with each other, connecting with other parents who were walking the same road and the overall spirit of cooperation and acceptance."

Another parent, Peggy Delaney, says "We moved from the city to Downers Grove and it was important for us to get to know families in our community who are touched by Down syndrome. Gigi's Playhouse has given us the perfect opportunity with Family Night. We have been able to talk to parents who live in our area and can recommend doctors, therapists, resources, and professionals who provide services to families with children who have special needs. We were thrilled to meet 3 families who actually live in our neighborhood and are really excited to begin our journey with them throughout the years as our children attend school together."

Delaney adds, "My two boys love coming to the event for the pizza and play time. It is very important to us that Jack (3, with DS) and Charlie (5) have social time with other families with the same dynamic. Charlie needs to begin building relationships with other children who are siblings to someone with Down syndrome. We have always felt that Gigi's Playhouse will give Charlie an instant set of peers that he begins to bond with over the years and eventually use as a sounding board as an advocate for his brother. I would encourage all parents to come and enjoy the fun, and take time to spend a casual evening with other parents who share this unique family dynamic."

Check calendar for dates at [www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org).



## Sioux City

### SIoux CITY + LITERACY=FUN

Our Literacy Celebration on May 1 will be lots of fun combined with the Summer Literacy Meet & Greet! By joining the two events we are able to give new & potential students and their families a chance to see firsthand how the program works and to interact with current students while getting all their questions answered!

Everyone is very excited for this summer's SUMMER FUN LITERACY Programs! These will be 1 day camps with

lots of peer interaction with words, numbers and letters! Make sure you register to attend by emailing [events@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:events@gigisplayhouse.org) Subject: Summer Fun Literacy. If you are looking for Volunteer opportunities join us on May 10 at 4:30 for our Volunteer Night!



### SAVE THE DATES:

Tue, May 10 @ 4:30pm, Volunteer Opportunities, @ the Playhouse  
Sun, May 22 @ 5:30pm, CDS Dance Celebration, @ Orpheum Theatre  
Fri, June 3 @ 6pm, Ladies Night Out, @ the Playhouse  
Tue, June 7 @ 9:30-11am, Summer Fun Literacy, @ the Playhouse

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cubs Event!

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

If you want tickets, go to [www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org) to purchase yours! Hurry, limited amount available!

**When:** Friday May 27th  
1:20pm

**Who:** Cubs vs. Pirates

**Cost:** \$5/ticket

*(tickets can be picked up at the Playhouse or mailed to your home)*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## 5K Teams!

### Join a Playhouse Group Team!

Have a child in one of these ages? Join their 5K team and meet other families with kids the same age from all 5 IL Playhouses!

2 and Under

Hop, Skip & Jumpers and Playhouse Pals (3-8)

Kids Club (9-12)

Teen Tastics (13-18)

Friday Friends (18+)

**Go to [www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://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](mailto:5K@gigisplayhouse.org)

The event takes place in the Arboretum! We will have food and bands after the event ends – plan to make it a family day! Help us make this the biggest awareness event of the year! Pick up some brochures at your local Chicagoland Playhouse to pass out!!



## Traveling Gallery On the Move!

During May and June, the Traveling Gallery will be displayed at Advocate Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, IL!

If you are interested in having it displayed in your area, contact [ihaveavoicproject@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:ihaveavoicproject@gigisplayhouse.org).



**Be sure to go to [www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://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!*

**GiGi's Atlanta has found a place to call home!**

Look for details about their Grand Opening in next month's newsletter!