



Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

educate. inspire. achieve.

October 2011

Newsletter

www.gigisplayhouse.org
info@gigisplayhouse.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coming soon:
New York, NY
Mexico



What an Honor!

GiGi's Playhouse is proud to share that we were honored with the National Parent Group Award at the National Down Syndrome Congress Annual Convention in San Antonio, TX last month! This prestigious award is presented to organizations that contribute to spreading positive and accurate awareness of Down syndrome throughout the nation. Nancy Gianni accepted the award on behalf of all our Playhouses nationwide and those up and coming. Here is an excerpt from her speech that night.

"I want to thank the board members, families, staff, volunteers and donors from around the world who make the Playhouses possible. Together we are changing the way the world sees Down syndrome which will make a difference not only in my daughter's life but in the lives of all children with Down syndrome!"

The next morning, GiGi's presented a workshop entitled The Power of Empowerment. With over 100 people in attendance, we spoke to new parents, parents of adults, educators, therapists and community members about how raising expectations of individuals with Down syndrome can empower parents, individuals with Down syndrome and the local community. We see this empowerment every day at the Playhouse! As a child walks out of the literacy room proud of her reading skills, or when a teen steps onto our stage to sing karaoke with pride, or when our siblings talk to their friends about how proud they are of their brother/sister with Down syndrome - these are all because of being empowered!

At GiGi's Playhouse we focus on the idea that belief in your child's potential can turn into action in your home and community. The end result is a home, school system, and community that upholds the high expectations you have for your child/adult.

Being empowered is a process - everything you do is a step in the right direction towards empowering yourself, your child and your community! The programs at GiGi's Playhouses are designed to help each member of the family and the community raise expectations of all individuals with Down syndrome!

For a copy of our powerpoint presentation, email info@gigisplayhouse.org.



Down Syndrome Awareness Month!

October is Down Syndrome Awareness month and all the GiGi's Playhouses are ready to help you spread awareness in your communities! We have calendars, newsletters, posters, activity books and so much more that can be used in your schools, stores, and anywhere in your community! Our Traveling Gallery is also available for use - email ihaveavoice@gigisplayhouse.org to get it near you!



What better way to spread awareness about Down syndrome than to open a Playhouse! And we have TWO Playhouses opening this month! Go to page 3 for details!

Spreading Awareness Internationally!

This is our newest board of directors - from MEXICO! We are so excited about opening in another country - the need is huge and there is a group ready to meet those needs! This Playhouse will be located in Queretaro, Mexico (a few hours north of Mexico City.) They have a GiGi's webpage and a Facebook page - get connected with them! Interested in helping them open, translating our materials into Spanish or assisting in some other capacity? Email mexicoqro@gigisplayhouse.org



GIGI's Playhouse News

Chicago

Raising Awareness in Chicago!

ABC Channel 7 featured GiGi's Playhouse Chicago on their midday news section! If you missed it, go to our facebook page! And thanks to a generous donation from Comcast, we've transformed our once-generic office space into a warm, welcoming Playhouse. We've seen the teens in our drama program gain confidence, poise and true stage presence (their film festival last month was again a huge treat). We've expanded our literacy tutoring, and continued outreach into underserved communities. We've partnered with other local organizations to offer a sibling support program and parent seminars.

Save the Date!

This month, we'll be celebrating our one-year(ish) anniversary in our new space on **Sunday, Oct. 23, at 10 a.m.** We'll be inviting everyone who's made this year so successful (and unveiling our new window decals), as we move into the future. We hope you can join us.

Des Moines



Thank you to Troy Hugen for organizing our first "Friends of GiGi's Playhouse" Golf Outing. It was a lot of fun and a very successful fundraiser.

Please join us for Music Therapy on the second Saturday each month (check the online calendar). This group is led by Shelly Peterson from Kids in Harmony. We are so lucky to have her! Shelly is a board certified music therapist providing in home services to individuals having special needs as well as adaptive music lessons. For information on private therapy contact her at: Music Therapy Services and Music Lessons
Des Moines, IA 50310, 515 494 4618
Contact: Shelly Peterson, mtinharmony@hotmail.comourp

Mark your calendars for our 2nd Annual - All Ages Halloween Party! Friday Night, October 28th from 6:30-8:30 followed by a dance from 8:30 - 9:30 pm. We will have a costume parade, trick or treating, dancing and games.



Fox Valley

This is the amazing story about a non-profit group that raised funds for GiGi's Playhouse Fox Valley!

It all started when the VW club met, Manny who happens to have Down syndrome. Joe Hauge, the group's President suggested their club donate the earnings from their annual Bug-A-Palooza to a local organization that supports Down syndrome, in honor of Manny.

Over the years, the club has always had a desire to do more for GiGi's and Hauge came up with the "crazy idea" to rebuild and raffle off a vintage bug. Member Dean Bolton donated the body, and a host of sponsors came forward to support their efforts.

"I knew we had a great club, and we could pull something like this off," says Hauge. "But to this magnitude, and how this turned out was nothing short of amazing!"

GiGi's Fox Valley Board President, Michele Ptaszek shares "When people involved do not have a child with Down syndrome, it makes their gift truly remarkable, because it means that some individual with Down syndrome has touched their lives and inspired them to help make a difference. They see value and potential in people with Down syndrome just as we do."



For more information about Harsh Winters VW Club, and their journey with the VW Raffle bug visit harshwintersvw.com.

Thank you Joe and the entire Harsh Winters VW Club.



McHenry

Open Play was a huge hit this past summer....so many new families! We welcome all our new friends, we are so happy that you came into GiGi's Playhouse McHenry to share your stories, no two are the same, each unique and told with love. One new Mom said "it's like a breath of fresh air just walking through the door, everyone is so nice and so welcoming". Another Mom said, "I had no idea what to expect, I'm so glad I came!" GiGi's Playhouse is something different for everyone.

Also during Open Play this summer we had a wonderful Music Class run by one of our High School students that is a regular volunteer, Claire G. The kids and adults enjoyed singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. A couple kids even got to have some one-on-one time playing and learning the keyboard. Claire did a fantastic job of teaching many different skills all while having fun, what a great way to learn! Thank you Claire for your time and dedication to GiGi's Playhouse McHenry!



GIGI's Playhouse News

ROCKFORD

Our Local Teen Tastic Tour

The Teen Tastics group from GiGi's Rockford left the playhouse for a few months and went on a summer tour around town! The first stop on the tour was at Magic Waters water park in June for an evening of fun in the sun! In July, the group took in an outdoor movie at Friday Night Flicks where they watched Madagascar and ordered pizza under the stars! The August tour stop was a Riverhawks baseball game where two of the teens, Logan and Conner, threw out the first pitches and yet another teen, Julia, sang "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" during the 7th inning! The last stop on the tour was at Lockwood Park in September for a cookout, hayride and bonfire! The teens had a fun time enjoying popular Rockford attractions while building relationships with each other. They are also looking forward to returning to the playhouse this month for a Halloween costume party, Wii and Karaoke contests and much more!



SIoux CITY, IOWA

Adding some Technology to the Playhouse...

Thank you to the Gateway Foundation for awarding GiGi's Playhouse in Sioux City a grant for, 6 NEW all-in-one touchscreen laptops! They will be used in our Literacy program as well as the future Math program. They will be very useful in our tutoring program since there are endless online games and resources that can meet the needs of all of our learners at the Sioux City Playhouse! We appreciate the generosity of the Gateway Foundation! Thanks to their grant program, our educational tutoring will be greatly enhanced!

Ray has changed our lives for the better!!

Raymond David Douglas Goettsch (a.k.a. Lil Ray Ray) was born May 14, 2010! Ray was born with DS; we didn't know it until 5 days after birth. It was a very shocking and life changing thing to happen to our family!

During the time Ray was in the NICU in Omaha we met another mom with a child with Down syndrome and was talking about GiGi's Playhouse in Sioux City. We thought we would check it out! We then attended the Christmas Party at GiGi's Playhouse in Sioux City! We fell in love with the Playhouse, people, and overall atmosphere of the place! It is a place where we can go to communicate with families with children with DS. We fell in love with the Playhouse so much Alan (husband) and I (Keely) both joined the Board this last year. We are looking forward to hosting the 2 & younger group and get them meeting on a regular basis to welcome new families and answer any questions they might have.

Ray has changed our lives for the better!! We love him so much and the love he gives us is incredible!! I wish all of us could see the world like he does. In his short life he has gone through so much and is still the best natured little guy there is!!



2 Grand Openings in Down Syndrome Awareness Month!

October 1st – Quad Cities, IL/IA

October 8th – Atlanta, GA

Quad Cities

Excitement is building at GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities as we prepare for our Grand Opening October 1, 2011! A team of generous volunteers has given up evenings and weekends to lend a hand to our construction and painting efforts. We are now putting on the finishing touches, scheduling volunteers, and preparing to begin programming.

Please join The UpSide of Down Syndrome Family Group for their annual walk, Walking on the UpSide of Down Syndrome, on October 1 at 10:00 AM. All proceeds from this year's walk benefit GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities! We hope you will also join us later that day from 3-5 PM for our Grand Opening Celebration!



Atlanta

GiGi's Playhouse Atlanta is proud to announce our Grand Opening Oct 8th, 2011. Come One Come All between 3-5 pm and get a tour of our newly built-out facility at : 549-1 Amsterdam Ave ATL 30306 (former location of The Cook's Warehouse in Amsterdam Walk).

You can meet our volunteer tutors and therapists and learn a lot about our programs. The excitement is already building and it will be a great celebration!

Hoffman Estates

Our very own Prince Williams!



This week, we had not 1 but 2 William's come to the Playhouse for their first time. They are both 6 months old and we were thrilled to meet them. Both moms were excited to learn about the Playhouse through their hospital network and through a friend of the playhouse, came to Open Play to meet other moms – and other Williams! **Welcome boys!**

Be sure to come to programs on the following days!

October 2nd GIGIFEST – everyone is welcome! 12-3pm

October 8th – 9-10 Crawlers (led by a PT!)

10-11:30 2 and Under

11:30 Hop, Skip and Jumpers

SAVE THE DATE!

Golf Outing

October 7th!

Go to www.gigis-playhouse.org to register TODAY!



GiGi's Playhouse
1069 W. Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

nonprofit organization

u.s. postage

paid

schaumburg, il

permit no. 93



The countdown is on!

2nd Annual National Gala

February 25, 2012

SAVE THE DATE!! There is a
Gala in YOUR area!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Happy Anniversary GiGi's!

GIGIFEST!

Sunday, October 2nd • 12pm-3pm

GiGi's Playhouse is celebrating 8 years since its inception! Everyone is invited to this family day event which will be complete with a Red Carpet Walk featuring our 2012 Calendar models! There will be food, dancing, games and so much more!

See you there!
(Rain or shine!)
1069 W Golf Road,
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169



2012
Calendars!

**i am proud. i
am potential.
i am a gift.**

The 2012

Calendar theme is i AM ME – and that me represents SO many things! Be sure to order yours today at www.gigisplayhouse.org! These are great awareness tools to be given to family, friends, schools, hospitals and more!



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!