



**GiGi's
PLAYHOUSE**
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
Des Moines

educate. inspire. achieve

Newsletter



A Message from the National Office...



Catalyst for Change!

After stumbling upon the definition of Down syndrome in a children's dictionary, 10yr old Bella Gianni, GiGi's sister, recently wrote a 12 page letter in response...here is an excerpt...

"At my brothers basketball game, I got bored so I looked in my bag and took out a dictionary and just read the top of the pages with the first and the last words of the page. Then I came to "Down syndrome", so I read the definition. It said "a genetic condition in which a person is born with eyes that appear to slant, a broad skull and shorter fingers than normal." At first I thought I was reading the wrong definition, so I went to GiGi and her eyes weren't slanted, they looked perfect to me. After I looked at her beautiful eyes I measured her hand to mine, I am two years older than her and my hands are only an index fingernail bigger. When we were on our way home, me and GiGi were playing and I saw no difference in her from me. We both laugh, cry, teach and more."

Bella asked her mom why the definition didn't mention that Down syndrome is defined by an extra chromosome and instead it described Down syndrome by what a person might look like? That is a good question and shows the deep-rooted societal issue of defining people based on what they look like. GiGi's is working to change that – to let potential and ability be what defines people with Down syndrome and anyone else that is different from ourselves. Not by what they look like, not by what old stereotypes say. Bella wants to be part of that 20% that stands up for those that are bullied and has already drafted a letter to the maker of the dictionary.

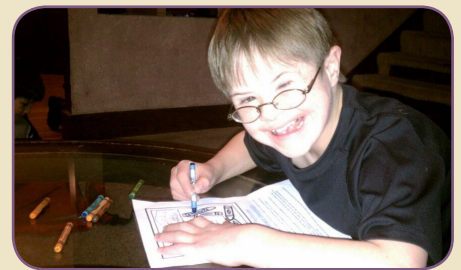
That's what GiGi's is all about – using the continued prevalence of outdated stereotypes as fuel to continue working hard to educate our communities. Each of our 10 Playhouses around the nation are focused on being a catalyst for change through the use of educational and therapeutic programming, national and local awareness campaigns, and community outreach. If you hear of any stories that show a need for training or education, please let your local Playhouse know! Together, we can make a difference!

Grandparents Get Involved

By, Lauren Reeves



Wishing everyone a Happy New Year! I met a grandfather of a child with Down syndrome from New York at the Board Retreat. He was telling me how much grandparents want to help but don't always know the best way to help their grandkids. His enthusiasm and support of GiGi's Playhouse inspired me to do a "Grandparent Campaign."



Go online to our Facebook page or stop by the Playhouse to receive a printout that your child can color, add a small photo and give to each grandparent this year.

Thank you so much for your help! Please contact Lauren if you have any questions.

Interested in Tutoring?

We are always looking for volunteers to help teach an individual with Down syndrome to read. Each tutor is required to commit to 1 hour a week for the Literacy session. All of the training you need is provided. If you know someone who would be a great tutor, please help us spread the word!

Any questions can be directed to Denice at reesross@q.com.



Our Spring 2012 Literacy Session is right around the corner!

Literacy will begin on February 5. Keep an eye on your email for Registration Forms. If you are not on our email list, please contact the Playhouse to get the forms mailed to you (515-252-7529). Registration forms are due no later than January 15th. Not sure if your child is ready for Literacy? If they can match a picture to a picture, sign them up!



Mom's Night Out

Are you stressed out from the holidays? Are you ready to celebrate the fact that they're over and you survived? Then come join us on January 7th @ GiGi's at 7pm for a night just for MOMS! We can play a little Bunco, eat some yummy treats, and chat with other moms!! Let's all bring an appetizer or treat to share, your beverage of choice, we can sit back and enjoy each other's company! Please RSVP to Meagan at meaganwortock@gmail.com! Hope to see you there!



Yoga

Michelle Soyer, will be resuming our Yoga Classes on January 14th. Children 12 & under will meet at 9am, and those over 12 will meet at 10am. The benefits our kids get from practicing yoga are tremendous, including building core strength and balance! Be sure to come check it out!



Volunteers Appreciated & Needed

- 1 person to send birthday cards, this can be done from home. GiGi's will provide the birthday list, stamps, cards & envelopes. The volunteer will be responsible to drop them in the mail each month.
- Volunteers to occasionally host Friday Friends.
- 10 volunteers in February to assemble New Parent Packets. A date & time to be determined.

For all volunteer questions please email Kathy Anderson at andersonjk@earthlink.net or call 515-669-4616.



“FORE” a great cause!

Around 50 friends of GiGi’s gathered for the first Friends Golf Outing. We were able to raise \$7,500 for the Playhouse. Many thanks to those who participated in year one!

The 2nd Annual Friends Golf Outing will be held on May 19th, 2012 at Copper Creek in Pleasant Hill. We are looking to construct a committee of 6 – 8 interested friends of GiGi’s. Our first meeting will be on Sunday, January 8th at 3:00. Most of the “work” can be completed by phone or email. If you have wanted to help out at GiGi’s but have been unable to find a way to do so this might be the perfect fit.

Please contact the Playhouse to get on the Golf email list and watch for details about our first meeting.



GiGi’s Playhouse Des Moines gets Awareness in Tanzania

Board of Director Member, Dr. Howard, traveled with a group called, Outreach, on a mission trip to Tanzania. During his 2 week trip he was able to help many children at a hospital and feeding center. When asked about the main difference of hospitals in the US and in Tanzania he said “the lack of supplies; Oxygen was a rare commodity, medications were generally hard to come by”. He stated that all his patients and fellow Doctors were very appreciative of the services that were performed. Dr. Howard was asked to make a presentation during his time in Tanzania and was able to include photos and information about GiGi’s Playhouse-Des Moines in his slides along with being asked to download his presentation during Grand Rounds at Mercy on Down syndrome.



Grazie mille! (“Thank you very much!”)

Thank you to the Italian-American Heritage of Iowa for donating \$2500 to our Playhouse! It was an excellent opportunity for Down syndrome Awareness & we are VERY appreciative of the donation. The festival is held annually in downtown Des Moines in July. Lots of great food, music, shows, games and fun was had by everyone. Discussions have begun for GiGi’s Playhouse Des Moines to be the recipient in 2012 and preparations have started for how to make GiGi’s Playhouse a more prevalent presence with banners, a booth, and giveaways! Pictured are Darren Marasco and Jeff Caracci from the Italian-American Society at the check presentation to our Board of Directors.



CALENDAR

- 2 4:30-5:30pm, *Language Group*
6:30-8pm, *Gala Planning Meeting*
- 5 6-7pm, *3-4yr old Playgroup*
- 6 10-11:30am, *Open Play*
7-9pm, *Friday Friends*
- 7 11-Noon, *Ready, Set, Action*
7pm, *Mom’s Night Out @ GiGi’s*
- 8 1-3pm, *Board of Directors Meeting*
3pm, *Golf Committee Meeting*
- 9 6:30-8pm, *Help a Heart*
- 10 6-7:30pm, *Family Fun Pizza Night*
- 13 7-9pm, *Friday Friends*
- 14 9-10am, *New Parents Group*
9-10am, *Yoga for Teens*
10-11am, *Yoga for 12 & Younger*
11-Noon, *Music Class*
- 20 10-11:30am, *Open Play*
7-9pm, *Friday Friends*
- 21 9-11am, *Special Art Open for all Ages w/ Matt Yegge*
11-Noon, *Story & Craft Time with Miss Jo*
7-9pm, *Special Art Teen Tastic w/ Jeff Wachuta*
- 24 6-7:30pm, *Family Fun Pizza Night*
- 27 7-9pm, *Friday Friends*



GiGi's Playhouse
10430 New York Ave Suite A
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nonprofit organization

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permit no. 93



Traveling Gallery on the Move!

January - Quincy, IL

February - Chicago, IL

March - Wyoming

Email ihaveavoicproject@gigisplayhouse.org to schedule it in your city!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Don't Stop Believing

Next month is our 2nd Annual "i have a voice" International Gala! It will be on Saturday, February 25th from 6 - 11 pm at the Marriott in Downtown Des Moines. Please register on our website: www.gigisplayhouse.org click "i have a voice gala" click on Des Moines or register at www.events.org/ihaveavoicedesmoines. We are taking the elegance,

inspiration, and fun from last year's gala and kicking it up a notch! With your \$75 ticket you will receive a 3 course meal, open bar, live entertainment from Gimikk and a silent auction! We are also featuring a live auction this year with artwork contributions from our own individuals with Down syndrome who have teamed up with local artisans. Check out our promotional video on our website or you can scan the code. Pass along the information to get your family & friends registered!

