



**GiGi's  
PLAYHOUSE**  
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers  
**Quad Cities**

educate. inspire. achieve

# Newsletter



## A Message from the National Office...

### The Making of a Playhouse

Ever wonder how a Playhouse actually gets started? In New York, they are days away from opening their own Playhouse. It doesn't happen overnight, and in New York they are closing in on this milestone only after months and months of hard work, community organizing, raising of funds – and most importantly – finding the right location.

In New York they are on the brink of realizing their goal thanks to a lot of hard work on behalf of their Board of Directors and their Site Coordinator, Britt. The Board and Britt have been busy raising the necessary funds and getting the word out in their community, but faced the challenge of finding a location for their Playhouse that was in a New York City location with good visibility, relatively easy to get to, and affordable. If you know anything about New York, the visibility and accessibility of a location can be pretty easy

to find – it's the affordable part that can be the challenge.

However, we are so happy to announce that GiGi's New York is about to become a reality. New York has the distinction of becoming our 10th Playhouse to open and the first of 2012. Thank you to the Board of Directors of GiGi's Playhouse New York for their dedication and unwavering commitment to bringing the mission of GiGi's to their community.



### Meet your Site Coordinator!

GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities would like to introduce you to our Site Coordinator, Michelle Hornbuckle. If you stop by the Playhouse on any given day, you may find Michelle performing administrative duties, participating in conference calls, assisting with programming, fundraising, or tutoring in the literacy program. Michelle lives in Bettendorf, Iowa, and was a stay-at-home mom for nearly 12 years prior to returning to the work force. Michelle is the mom to Connor (age 13), Kellen (age 9), and Nathan who earned his angel wings 4 1/2 years ago. It is Nathan who continues to inspire Michelle to raise awareness of Down syndrome and promote the abilities of these beautiful, amazing individuals. Although Nathan is no longer on this Earth, the programs and activities provided at GiGi's Playhouse are what Michelle and her family would have wanted for Nathan. Michelle says, "Nathan was a blessing and taught us all strength, perseverance, and love. Nathan taught us to expect more....and not to count him out!" Michelle is honored to hold the position of Site Coordinator and has high expectations for GiGi's Playhouse and all it has to offer to the Quad Cities Down syndrome community.



## Literacy in the QC

The highly anticipated Literacy Program is now underway in the Quad Cities, and the Playhouse is full of smiles and high fives from our extremely successful students and their proud parents and tutors! From our youngest student who will soon turn 3, to our teenagers who are enhancing comprehension skills while reading Teen magazines, parents continue to be amazed by the abilities of their children! As a result of these successes, the students are gaining confidence that can be carried over to the classroom, aiding the students in reaching their highest potential and raising awareness of the abilities of individuals with Down syndrome.

During this inaugural pilot session, there are 10 students receiving 45 minutes of private tutoring on a weekly basis for 8 weeks. Our Playhouse was so very fortunate to have trained 30 tutors and look forward to getting the remaining 20+ tutors assigned to students in upcoming sessions. To register your child or loved one for the Literacy Program, please contact us at the Playhouse at [literacyqc@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:literacyqc@gigisplayhouse.org) or 309-762-7529.

## CALENDAR



- 1 6:00pm, *Zumba*
- 2 7-9pm, *Friday Friends*
- 3 9:30, *2 & Under*  
10:30, *Hop, Skip, and Jumpers*
- 4 1-3pm, *Open Play*
- 10 10:00-11:30am, *Playhouse Pals/Kids Club*
- 15 6:00pm, *Zumba*
- 16 7-9pm, *TeenTastic/Friday Friends St. Patty's Day Party!*
- 17 9:30, *2 & Under*  
10:30, *Hop, Skip, and Jumpers*
- 18 1-3pm, *Open Play*
- 21 World Down Syndrome Day  
Famous Dave's Fundraising Night 5:00-8:00pm  
Please bring the attached flyer to Famous Dave's, 1110 E. Kimberly Road, Davenport, IA  
and GiGi's Playhouse QC will receive a donation of up to 20% of your dinner purchase!
- 24 GiGi's Playhouse Night with the Quad City Rollers, *River-Center, Davenport*  
Purchase your tickets in advance for \$10. Tickets available at the Playhouse
- 29 6:00pm, *Zumba*
- 31 NEW – Fine Motor Program

Now taking applications for participation in our Fine Motor Program. Space is limited, so reserve your spot now! Please contact us at the Playhouse for more information.

## Volunteer Spotlight

The Quad Cities' Literacy Program did not happen on its own or without the assistance of some key volunteers! This month we would like to introduce you to Kristen Hayes, our volunteer Literacy Coordinator. Kristen and her husband, Jeff, live in Eldridge and are the parents of three beautiful girls, Alexis, Kate, and Abbey. The Hayes family has actively participated in Down syndrome awareness events since the first Quad Cities Buddy Walk in 2005, and we are very fortunate to have Kristen heading up the literacy program. Kristen's experience in reading recovery and education provide her with the organizational and teaching skills necessary to help lead our team of literacy volunteers in bookmaking, curriculum planning, and schedule.

Thank you, Kristen, for your time and dedication to the literacy program. Through your generosity, you are encouraging success in academics for individuals with Down syndrome!

As always, GiGi's Playhouse has many ongoing volunteer needs. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us at the Playhouse at [quad-cities@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:quad-cities@gigisplayhouse.org) or 309-762-7529.



## Celebrating our first "Graduate"

The 2 & Under group celebrated their first graduate as Miss Kayla turned 3 and will be moving on to Hop, Skip, and Jumpers! Along with Kayla's birthday and graduation, she will be entering the world of preschool. The 2 & Under group and the rest of GiGi's Playhouse Quad Cities congratulate Kayla and her mom and dad, Nick and Kelli, and look forward to watch Kayla's continued development!



## NO BOUNDARIES

**By Paige Taghon, Korryn's sister**

Go back thirteen years ago, what was your life like back then? Were you facing new challenges, meeting new people? How has your life changed? For me, that answer is quite simple. Thirteen years ago, my family's world was flipped upside down. Thirteen years ago everything changed. Thirteen years ago my younger sister was born with Down syndrome. I was three years old at the time. I didn't understand everything that was going on, and my life from then on would be slightly different from everyone else's. I hadn't realized that my little sister could make such an impact on so many people's lives. Not only did she bring with her new challenges, but she taught us patience and to live and love with no boundaries.

When my sister, Korryn, was born with Down syndrome my family immediately faced new challenges. Korryn had health issues, and was hospitalized for a majority of her first year of life. Not only was it hard for Korryn, but the stress of it all hit the family, as a whole, pretty hard. My sister continues to face different health issues, but I'm happy to say they are under control for now. Another challenge we've faced is the actual fact of her having a disability. It hasn't been easy, and I can speak for my whole family in saying that we've all gone through the grieving process, and continue to, as we meet different obstacles in her life. People in society have a hard time accepting others with any type of mental retardation, and even if Korryn doesn't notice the stares, or comments, I do. Korryn has taught me that the disability doesn't make the person, and I've learned to stand up for what's right, even if it meant confronting my peers.

Although it seems as if my family's life has been a struggle for the past thirteen years, there's so much more to it. Korryn has brought us so much joy, and has taught more than just my family a few things about life. Korryn has one of the best personalities of anyone I know. She is caring and compassionate, and can cheer you up on your worst day. Every day after school she greets me with a big hug, looks up at me with a huge grin on her face and says, "how was your day Paigey?". Korryn also has the greatest sense of humor. She will laugh at anything and everything, and she is constantly cracking us up. She has no fear of embarrassment, she lives her life with no boundaries, and therefore she is my role model.

Values of patience, love, and faith are just a few of life's lessons I've been taught through my little sister. Down syndrome is a learning disability; it means that Korryn learns at a slower pace than everyone else. In order for us to teach her, patience on our part was a necessity, and we learned a lot from it. Korryn taught us to love unconditionally, to love people for who they are deep down. She sees only the good in people; I only wish I could do the same. Besides patience and love, faith plays a huge role in my family's lives too. Faith is what keeps us going, and it gives us hope for whatever challenge comes our way.

Thirteen years ago, my life had changed without me even realizing it. Thirteen years ago, I met one of my best friends, one of my heroes. In more ways than one, Korryn has changed my life. God placed her in our lives for a reason, to teach the most important lessons in life. Korryn has shown me how life should be lived, with no boundaries.



GiGi's Playhouse  
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in your city!

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