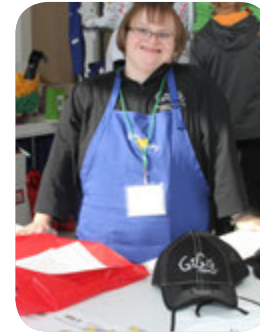


Holiday Cheer

Hugs & Mugs Now Open!



Hugs & Mugs Gift Shop & Café offers customized coffee mugs using your artwork or ours; filled with treats including cookies, popcorn and chocolate bars. Each mug is designed, printed and pack-

aged by participating adults with DS. Warm a friend's heart, send your favorite teacher a special thank you, or surprise Grandma and Grandpa with a gift that's truly personal! Create your very own customized mug for \$15 or choose one of our pre-designed mugs, starting at \$10. Shipping is available for an additional fee.

In 2014, Hugs & Mugs will be open to serve customers at 2350 West Higgins Road in Hoffman Estates. Come in just for a cup of coffee, to see our participants' artwork, pick-up your favorite mug and browse additional GiGi's Playhouse merchandise. You can also host your child's birthday party at Hugs & Mugs, where each child takes home their own customized mug!

Our Hugs & Mugs store is now accepting online orders and our retail storefront will be opening in January 2014! To place your order now, visit our website, www.GiGisPlayhouse.org/hugs-and-mugs. Print the online order form and submit your artwork or photographs to HugsAndMugs@GiGis-Playhouse.org to make your very own mug!



We've Moved!



One child, one diagnosis, one community at a time—that's how we roll!

I feel like we just finished the final lap of a triathlon! In the last 3 weeks alone, we celebrated 10 years with the opening of the brand new Achievement center in Hoffman Estates, traveled to Nashville for their grand opening and hosted 150 dedicated board members, volunteers and staff from around the US and Mexico for our annual National Conference and Banquet. I love that one—it's the most inspiring weekend of the year for me. We had 16 fully functioning Playhouses participating along with 4 emerging playhouses to round us out at 20 Playhouses networking and paving the way for Down syndrome achievement worldwide. Yes, all that in 3 weeks—but if we go back a little further...

- ✱ We re-branded as **Down Syndrome Achievement Centers!**
- ✱ We opened our first **INTERNATIONAL** Playhouse in Queretaro, Mexico!
- ✱ We opened **new Playhouses** in Oak Forest, IL and Twin Cities, MN!
- ✱ We launched a progressive learning program for adults with DS called **GiGi University!**
- ✱ We mentored pregnant women and new parents of children with DS!
- ✱ We launched our 11th Down syndrome awareness **calendar!**
- ✱ We piloted 12 **new programs** at locations across the country!
- ✱ We built and paid for the new **National Achievement Center!** through the incredible generosity of our amazing donors!

All this while serving more than 16,000 amazing individuals with Down syndrome! Did we do this alone? No! It was all of us together! Bigger, better, stronger together! Oh sorry, I am still in conference mode! Yee Haw! Uh-oh now I am back in Nashville! Hola amigos! Mexico mode? Suffice to say it has been one wild ride!

Thank you for believing in me and all of the amazing children and adults with DS. We still need your voice, your heart and your commitment. I **PROMISE** we will make you proud: **One child, one diagnosis, one community at a time.**

Love, Nancy and GiGi





GiGi U in the house!

Twelve amazing adults have embarked on a journey to develop new levels of confidence, health and wellness, and career skills—all to reach their highest potential through participation in GiGi University. GiGi University is a progressive program for adults with Down syndrome, which offers classroom-based skill development to help students prepare for success in the workplace and have greater self-sufficiency. Each week at “GiGi U”, students work toward a higher level of personal achievement. We work hard and play hard too! Students develop personal strengths, exercise three times per week, receive homework each night, and make healthy eating a priority!



Participating adults have already completed a personal assessment of strengths and areas of improvement, organized a volunteer project to benefit tornado victims, completed 30 minutes of circuit training in the gym, and planned a healthy meal—and that’s just one day of achievement! We are just a few weeks into our inaugural session and the positive changes are already shining through: greater self-confidence, weight loss, increased energy and universal pride! We are SO proud of our GiGi U students for their determination to grow and show the world their potential!

“GiGi’s is a place that helps others know about what people with Down syndrome can do. I’m a leader! Leadership is when you take a risk and when you take charge to make things happen! GiGi University helps me to be a leader. I work hard and there is nothing that I can’t do!”

- Farzin Sharyari, student at GiGi University

For more information on GiGi University, please email Program Manager Maggie Richey at GiGiUniversity@GiGiPlayhouse.org. Applications for the next session will be available in December, for participation beginning in late January. Follow our students’ journey on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/gigisplayhouse.

Celebrating 10 years ✨

On October 27th parents, siblings, volunteers, Board members, neighboring businesses, members of the media, and of course generous donors—in total exceeding 1,500 people—united together on a beautiful sunny day to celebrate the many achievements of individuals with Down syndrome and kick-off the next generation of GiGi’s Playhouse. VIP guests toured the new 10,000 square foot National Achievement Center and marveled at the new Learning Labs, Get Fit gym, Studio G kitchen and art center, GiGi University classrooms, and the Hugs & Mugs retail store front and design studio.

Thank you to event sponsors Accurate Personnel, Garibaldi’s Restaurant and MCS for your support of the 2013 GiGiFest Celebration and thank you to all families who attended. To view more pictures from GiGiFest and the grand opening, please visit GigisPlayhouse.org/gigi-fest-photos



Growing our Community

GiGi’s Playhouse growth is stronger than ever! We opened 4 new locations in 2013 (more than any other year!) and plan to open at least 6 more in 2014. Inquiries continue to pour in every week, as people across the world are hearing about the mission and success of GiGi’s Playhouse. They all have a common goal of wanting to find a way to make this dream a reality in their own communities. “GiGi’s Playhouse of Milwaukee will be a place where my daughter Thea can be herself without judgment, a place where I will find support no matter how old she is...GiGi’s will be a place that does not set limits but inspires our kids to dream big.”

Kate Dessanoy, Milwaukee, WI

Locations World Wide!

- ✦ Atlanta, GA
- ✦ Bradley, IL
- ✦ Chicago, IL
- ✦ Des Moines, IA
- ✦ Fox Valley, IL
- ✦ Hoffman Estates, IL
- ✦ McHenry, IL
- ✦ Nashville, TN
- ✦ New York, NY
- ✦ Oak Forest, IL
- ✦ Quad Cities, IL
- ✦ Rockford, IL
- ✦ Sioux City, IA
- ✦ Syracuse, NY
- ✦ Twin Cities, MN
- ✦ Querétaro, Mexico

Emerging locations Milwaukee, WI, El Paso, TX, Scottsdale, AZ, Madison, WI, Cedar Rapids, IA and Indianapolis, IN



Nicole's Journey

Growing up in Chicago, Nicole was horribly teased by children who weren't taught that everyone has potential, and that everyone should be treated with dignity. She was bullied and had a very difficult time in school. Nicole lost her motivation to learn and to grow as a teenager. As an adult, Nicole stayed home most of the time and didn't want to try living a happy and fulfilling life.

This past June, 32-year-old Nicole and her mother Diana were asked to attend a focus group for GiGi University. They jumped at the opportunity and things haven't been the same since! In July, Diana shared the following regarding Nicole's participation in the focus group, "She loves GiGi's. She would probably live here if she could.... She loves it and I think this is what gave her the motivation and incentive to write [in her journal]. She really wants to go to GiGi U."

Through the end of the summer, Nicole attended each GiGi University focus group meeting; arriving early and staying late to help clean up. After her second focus group session, Nicole told the staff and volunteers, "This is just so cool. I can't believe I get to do this! This is so cool!" Nicole loved every moment with her peers, taking in everything that was discussed. During that time, a transformation began, turning this very shy young woman into a passionate and motivated adult! Nicole is determined to better herself and change her life. Nicole began writing and reading for two hours every night, pulling her Mom from cleaning up after dinner to

sit and work with her. She began waking up early, excited to start her day. When the time came to apply to

GiGi University, Nicole wrote all of the words on her own this time. She took the time to complete each question and turn in her own work. She prepared for her interview and worked her hardest to manage the anxiety and fear of not being not accepted. After the interview, she anxiously waited.

Two weeks later, the call came. Diana answered the phone and heard the words that Nicole had been accepted to the pilot program of GiGi University! She broke into tears, knowing her daughter would be forever changed.

As the weeks go by, Nicole's transformation continues. Nicole has never given up, even when the homework or reading seemed too hard. She approaches every workout with enthusiasm and pride, despite having an injured right arm in a sling. She is determined to grow and reach her highest potential, and show the world she can do anything she chooses! We love you Nicole-keep up the great work!



Nicole (left) with her peers at GiGi U.

Help us continue to support individuals with Down syndrome

I'm interested in learning more about:

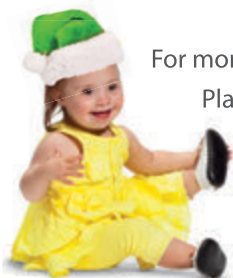
- Achievement Center Naming Opportunities
- Gala Sponsorship Opportunities
- Hosting a fundraising event to benefit GiGi's
- Hosting an event to sell mugs for Hugs & Mugs
- Volunteering for a GiGi's Playhouse program

Is your holiday gift in honor or in memory of someone special? If so, fill out the information below for the acknowledgment card:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 ZIP _____ Phone _____
 E-mail Address: _____

If you do not want an acknowledgment mailed please leave this section blank.

For more information about ALL of GiGi's Playhouse programs, volunteer opportunities, and giving opportunities: please visit GiGisPlayhouse.org.



Please turn over

Blessing of Baby Sara

When I was 11 weeks pregnant with Sara, my doctor told me he suspected Sara would be born with Down syndrome. I could not believe it, I was in shock. I was not having a child with Down syndrome. As the next few months went by, I tried to deny the diagnosis, but with every test and every ultrasound, the results were the same- Down syndrome. I was overcome with fear. I kept thinking that I have to do something.

I had heard about GiGi's Playhouse when I was about 5 months pregnant, but didn't know what to expect. The fear was getting bigger and bigger. When sitting at the cardiologist one day, I felt like I needed to do something - I was 7 months pregnant- and the doctor mentioned GiGi's place again. I knew I needed to go there, and when I left I went straight to GiGi's Playhouse.

When I walked in the door, I saw Nancy and asked to speak with someone. I told Nancy why I was there. She immediately smiled and hugged me. I was in shock; no one had ever responded that way. No one ever seemed to know what to say.

As I spoke with Nancy and Clare that day, the fear that had once taken over every bit of me, was washed down the drain. GiGi's Playhouse changed me inside. I finally understood that my life wasn't going to end with the birth of my child. That having a child with Down syndrome is a blessing and beautiful journey. I walked out that day, with a big

smile and no fear. I began enjoying my pregnancy again and looked forward to meeting Sara.

I found peace and made peace with myself, thanks to GiGi's playhouse, I was able to look at my daughter for the first time when she was born and feel pure love and joy. There was no fear, no regrets, no doubt, no disappointment - only extreme happiness.

Today, Sara is 10 weeks old and is smiling and cooing. She loves music and her brother Phillip and is growing so fast. She was born with a hole in her heart, but it's getting better. I'm still crossing my fingers, but so far she is doing really well. My heart is now open to the joy of Sara!

I feel so blessed I found GiGi's Playhouse and the support I was looking for! People who work there are amazing, full of love and understanding since they have their own stories too. I found peace there, lost my fear, gained new friends and found a place for our family to grow. I am forever thankful for the support of GiGi's Playhouse!

—Gracjana Pedicone, mom to Sara



Thank you for believing in individuals with Down syndrome and their families. We appreciate your generous support!

I want to give:

- \$25
- \$50
- \$75
- \$100
- \$250
- Other _____

I want my gift to support:

- Literacy and Math Tutoring
- Therapeutic Programs
- GiGi University and Hugs & Mugs
- New Program Development
- Greatest Area of Need

My donation is made:

- As a General Donation
- In Honor of _____
- In Memory of _____

I want my gift to recur monthly:

- Yes No

I am donating by: Check Credit Card

Card # _____

Expiration Date _____ / _____

Signature _____

Billing Address (if different than mailing address)


Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

ZIP _____ Phone _____

E-mail Address: _____

 Save money on printing and postage: donate ONLINE at <http://bit.ly/gigisholidaycheer> donate monthly at: <http://bit.ly/gigisholidaymonthly>



Thank you Capital Campaign Donors! ❄️

Vince, Pat, Kym and Vinnie Foglia
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 Perkins + Will
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 Accurate Personnel and the Rios Family
 Caruso Development Corporation
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 The Dolan Family
 The Giancola Family
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 The Levitz Family Foundation
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 The Ryan Family
 The Schiavitti Family

Also, a huge thank you to our anonymous donors, and all of the donors to the Challenge Grant!

THANK YOU FOR HELPING
 MR AND
 MY FRIENDS,
 We work hard,
 I promise
 We will make
 you proud,
 Love,
 Gigi



“Wow—what a cause. This is fantastic!”

Vince Foglia, whose family foundation served as the lead donor for the capital campaign. Mr. Foglia is thrilled to be part of the Gigi's Playhouse family and we cannot thank his family enough for their vision, passion and generosity toward our families!

We're EXCITED to announce that our annual "I Have A Voice" International Gala will take place on Saturday March 1, 2014

at a brand new venue: Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace! We're growing and plan to host 1,000 guests! Additional Galas will take place the same night nationwide to collectively celebrate the achievements of our individuals and families. The Chicagoland Gala can be viewed LIVE online, and people who can't make the event can still participate in our auctions—just by using their cell phones! We're thrilled to welcome back guest host and MC Rob Johnson of CBS 2 News. Most importantly, the Gala provides our individuals the opportunity to celebrate their achievements, and continue to change the way people view Down syndrome through their amazing self-confidence (and of course, their great dance moves!) Tickets go on sale in December: stay tuned and get ready to party!



how to support playhouse families



Wish List ❄️

We're still building a dream! The following items are still needed to support the new National Achievement Center, GiGi University, The Hugs & Mugs store, and the national office:

- Treadmill for Get Fit Gym
- Laptops and software for Hugs & Mugs
- Furniture for Hugs & Mugs
- Office supplies: copy paper, cardstock paper for literacy

For a complete Wish List please visit GiGisPlayhouse.org/Wishlist.

Champions Circle ❄️

The Champion's Circle is monthly giving club at GiGi's Playhouse. Starting as low as \$10 per month, or 30 cents per day (less than half a cup of coffee!) supporters like you can help fund current programs as well as new program development. A great opportunity for grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, clients, and local businesses to join! For more information, please visit GiGisPlayhouse.org/donate-monthly.



Achievement Center Naming Opportunities

Naming donations of \$5,000 or higher will be prominently recognized in the National Achievement Center and the new national web site. For more information on naming opportunities, please contact Development Director Marc Portugal via e-mail at mportugal@gigisplayhouse.org or via phone at 847.807.3470.

Literacy is a door to a brighter future for miss Lydia. It has opened a new world with words and meanings! When she read her first words, I was in tears! I thought, if she can read, what else can she do?



Volunteer

Volunteers are the heart and soul of GiGi's Playhouse. From program leaders and tutors, to event planners and more: we rely on our valued volunteers every single day and we're always looking for more!

To learn more about volunteering for GiGi's Playhouse, please join us for our monthly Volunteer Open House and Orientation on the second Tuesday of the month from 6:00-7:30pm.

Please send RSVPs or questions to VolunteerHoffmanEstates@gigisplayhouse.org.

