

Happy Spring!!!

Wow! I just heard a great quote from the president of our new Raleigh location. A new family brought their first and only child, who has DS to their open house. For the first time the family realized they will never be alone. A few months later they told Jeanhee, *"Because of you we are going to have more children, we now know we can be the parents that we need to be."* Their fear coupled with the uncertainty of their child's future led them to believe they should not have more kids. Now they know they **CAN** do this and we **WILL** be with them every step of the way!

To ensure we are growing with our families we started our therapeutic excellence committee and our education committee. These teams are adapting all of our programs to be more therapeutic-based, increase measurable outcomes and create practical applications for the families to use at home. Our goal would be to see purposeful progressions in these specific areas.



Here is a great example on how well this is working in our Amina Grace Speech Program! *"Mitchell is feeling on top of the world. At his bowling league on Tuesday a friend of ours was telling us that she can really understand Mitchell so much better lately. His speech and the way he makes eye contact and speaks with his head up has really made a difference. So grateful to you. You have been the best therapist and inspiration to Mitch his entire life. I am not kidding. You are amazing. The follow up you give me is priceless to be a part of and help him to transition his skills at home and while I am with him in the community."*

Mitchell is growing in his confidence and his family is continuing his work at home and in his everyday life! This is exactly what these committees are working towards! **LIFE CHANGING** results! Without all of you this could not be happening! GiGi and I are traveling to Madison this month for the opening of our 30th Playhouse!!! With high expectations and **BELIEF** we really can change the world one child, one diagnosis, one community at a time!

XOXOXO
Nancy and GiGi



GiGi's Playhouse™

Spring
2016

down syndrome achievement centers

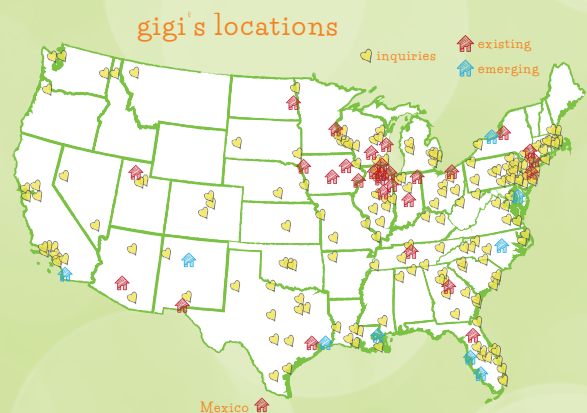
"GiGi's Playhouse is the BEST EXPERIENCE EVER!!! It is such a growing and learning experience for the child. Long before my granddaughter, Joslyn, was born, I worked for a company that held fundraisers for GiGi's Playhouse. It meant so much to me then, knowing everything GiGi's did for its families. Now, it means even more to me! GiGi's Playhouse is all about the child! It is so great to have a place where we can come make friends and find families to connect with. It is truly the best experience ever!"



- Marilyn Petone
aka Joslyn's Grandma

Coming Soon!

Playhouses 30 & 31!
Madison is opening May 22nd
Raleigh is opening June 18th



Changing the way the world sees Down syndrome.
one child. one diagnosis. one community at a time.



In Our Community

"We moved to a new town in the spring of 2015 and our daughter began first grade in the fall. After fourteen extremely painful weeks of school, we decided homeschooling for the remainder of the year was best for Louise. We are moving out of that district, and we are moving on. We were so grateful to receive support from somewhere that has always been there for us: GiGi's Playhouse. We've been coming to GiGi's since Louise was 7 months old and now at age 7, they are still here for us. Nancy and the playhouse staff heard what our family has been going through and said "you can't do this alone. Let's set Louise up with tutoring and therapy." Louise and I went to the playhouse the following week and talked with the speech therapist and with some of the playhouse staff. We signed Louise up for literacy and math tutoring as well as speech therapy at GiGi's Playhouse and Louise starts this month. Louise has been a part of the literacy program before and I have been a math tutor, so my family knows how life changing these programs are. We are beyond grateful for the love and support from GiGi's Playhouse during this stressful time in our lives. The Down syndrome community is blessed to have Nancy and GiGi, and their vision for changing the world. There aren't enough ways for my family to say thank you. We love you Nancy and GiGi's Playhouse! "

~ Meagan Stasiek

In our Playhouse

Our Playhouse was so excited to welcome the families of Harrison and Paisley to the GiGi's Family. They both attended programs at GiGi's for the first time this month and were welcomed with love and acceptance! GiGi's is a safe place for new families to find the support that they need to process the diagnosis and to know that they are not alone!



In Our Volunteers

Brian started volunteering as a tutor at GiGi's Playhouse a year ago. He quickly fell in love with being a Literacy tutor to our students. He has such a heart for teaching our children and adults with Down syndrome. Brian is always willing to go above and beyond for his students. Whether it is bringing in silly hats to help his students engage or donating his entire Saturday morning to the Playhouse to do back-to-back sessions, Brian is there for his students. Brian is changing the lives of his students and he BELIEVES in each and every one of them. He makes learning fun and gets his students excited about Literacy! A parent of one of his students shared "Jaden looks forward to GiGi's each week with Brian!"



In Our Classrooms

"GiGi U is so important to my family. Karina is able to be a part of group that has so much interaction with one another and I love that my daughter is able to apart of such a program that holds such high expectation. So many times she has been labeled "unable" or "unfit" for programs and at GiGi's she has a place that she not only belongs, but a place that is pushing her to reach her highest potential. GiGi's has not only provided Karina that, but they have also given me the support that I need to make it happen. Karina told me something the other day that I never thought I would hear, she shared that she had talked in front of her of GiGi U class. This brought me so much joy, knowing that my daughter that I have fought for her entire life has finally found a place where she can grow in her confidence and SHINE in ways I have never imagined! "

~ Xiomara A Sanchez





Educate

Now that our first session of the Amina Grace Speech and Language Program has come to an end, here is what parents are saying:

"When your child can talk and be understood, they are much more intelligible to the world and it helps them to be viewed as more of the same then different."

The purpose of creating the Amina Grace Speech and Language Program was to develop an individualized plan of care, tailored to each participant's needs, to teach participants how to produce sounds, improve oral-motor functions and increase language skills to communicate more effectively. In essence, participants will learn to develop or recover communication skills in order to fulfill education, vocational and social roles through a purposeful and progressive model.

First Session of Speech

23 Participants

750 Minutes of Therapy given each week



Inspire

Gen G

Be Kind. Be Accepting. Be Generous.

I pledge to join Generation G:

I **accept** you as you are.

I **choose** to be better every day.

I will **fight** for you and have your back.

I will be **generous** with my time and my heart.

I will be **heroic** and speak up if someone needs help.

I will **invite** 21 new people to join Generation G.

I will **make** Generation G part of my everyday life.

#generationG!

Post it!

Make a change!



What do you want people to know about Down syndrome?

A lot of kids have Down syndrome, and adults too! If you believe in us we can do better. I care about people, you need to care about people too. You need to believe in yourself.

People with Down syndrome should be strong, don't be afraid.



GiGi University is continuing to grow and we are so excited. We welcomed 6 brand new families to GiGi U this March. Their first day was so special since it was also the launch of Generation G. All families joined in the celebration. New families have shared how they are so grateful for the GiGi U program and to be able to see their adults continue to grow and learn career readiness skills that they never thought were possible. We can't wait to see our new adults show their BEST OF ALL as they continue their journey to build skills this summer!



Believe

SPREADING THE LOVE!

If you are available to attend or volunteer at any of these events please email events@gigisplayhouse.org #strongertogether

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|-------------|---|-------|---|
| 6.12 | Chicagoland 5K!!! | 9.16 | Tootsie Roll Drive with the Knights of Columbus |
| 7.20 – 7.23 | NDSC Convention | TBD | TBD Golf Outing |
| 7.28 | Uncorked in the Arboretum | 10.9 | Chicagoland Buddy Walk |
| 8.20 | San Fillipo – Carousel of Possible Dreams | 10.16 | GiGiFest!!! |



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
2350 West Higgins Road
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national newsletter • spring 2016 edition

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As you know, the 5K is upon us! This event is not about one person or one team. It is about the collective US giving a platform for our families to shine and for change to occur. Bigger, Better, and Stronger Together!

The Chicagoland 5K, Fun Run and Family Fest is for EVERYONE! If your family has financial concerns we can help! Please email us at 5K@gigisplayhouse.org or call Shannon at 847-807-4943!

This is our biggest event of the year. It is all about potential. It will be filled with many firsts. This may be the first time families will be attending with their new infant, the first time a donor may see the power of our DS network, where a politician can see the significance of our advocacy efforts, an employer can see potential of a future employee, a landlord to see adults with Ds as potential tenants, a professor to see students with Ds in their school or university and the list goes on and on. This 5K event is our opportunity to showcase the tremendous gifts individuals with DS have to offer. This is truly the single most important event we do all year to raise awareness in the Chicagoland area.

Sunday, June 12, 2016

7:30-8:30 am	Open Registration
8:45 am	5K Run Starts
9:30 am	1 Mile Walk
10:30am	Dash for Down Syndrome
11:00 am	Live Music, Games & Food

NEW VENUE!



\$15.00 per person (under 12)
\$25.00 per person (until June 5)
\$35.00 per person (after June 5)

GiGi's Playhouse 2016 Chicagoland 5k, Fun Run and Family Fest

It's a new year, a new location and so much more! Join us on Sunday, June 12th for a day of celebration, inspiration and entertainment! Music, dancing, food, drinks, games, jumpy houses, shopping and oh yea, a 5k fun run, a 1 mile walk and the FAMOUS Dash for Down syndrome!

**Get Ready! Get Fit! Build a Team!
Build more Acceptance for kids and adults with Down syndrome!**

