



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GiGi's Playhouse Free Purposeful Programs Go Mobile: Debut and Program Pilot for Central Illinois Families Launching This Weekend

Hoffman Estates, IL, August 26, 2017 – For the first time ever, GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Centers will debut an innovative "pop up" Playhouse and mobile program pilot to families and communities in less densely populated areas. In doing so, more individuals with Down syndrome and their families can access free, purposeful programs outside of a brick & mortar Playhouse. The pop-up playhouse and mobile program pilot was made possible by the incredibly generous funding from the 2017 Northwestern University Dance Marathon project; investing more than \$254,000 to support program innovation and expansion.

Thanks to another very generous donation by the Down Syndrome Advocacy Group of Central Illinois (DSAG), GiGi's Playhouse will host a kick-off event for its pop-up Playhouse and mobile programming pilot on Saturday August 26th 2017 at the Annual Lincoln Balloon Festival in Lincoln, IL from 1-4PM. Expecting roughly 30,000 attendees, this event attracts participants from Peoria, Bloomington, Decatur, Springfield, Champaign, and more. A Chamber of Commerce reception will be hosted on Friday evening. Governor Bruce Rauner, Senator Bill Brady, Congressman Darin LaHood, and State Representative Tim Butler have all responded and expect to be in attendance.

The objective of these events is to introduce families, educators, government leaders, service providers, the media and community members to the concept of GiGi's Playhouse and how it will engage with this community going forward. The festival itself and the mobile programming debut occurs on Saturday August 26th. GiGi's Playhouse staff and volunteers will lead portions of various Playhouse programs including LMNOP, Playhouse Pals, Teen Tastics, and others. Thereafter, the local community will provide ongoing monthly programming throughout the community through a "pop-up" Playhouse, serving individuals with Down syndrome of all ages and their families. Running a successful pop-up Playhouse and mobile programming require the time and dedication of many people including family members, friends, therapists, teachers and community members. GiGi's Playhouse is actively seeking volunteers to help provide one-on-one tutoring, lead and support programs, and several other jobs.

GiGi's Playhouse Founder and "Chief Belief Officer" Nancy Gianni, and her daughter GiGi, will speak to reception attendees on Friday night and help "start" the event by initiating the Balloon Glow at 8PM. From Nancy: "For years, it has been a dream of ours to launch mobile programming in communities for families who do not have access to a Playhouse and our free, purposeful programs. Some communities have nothing at all for their children due to budgetary limitations, or simply because the Down syndrome community is not valued. All individuals with Down syndrome have a voice. They all deserve acceptance, dignity and purpose. They all deserve to be successful in school and at work. We could not be more honored to debut our mobile program launch in the same state that the first Playhouse opened and we can't wait to stand with thousands of families in Lincoln and throughout the country as one voice for global acceptance."



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Live event updates can be followed on GiGi's Playhouse National Facebook page. For more information about GiGi's Playhouse mobile programming in Lincoln, IL: visit www.gigisplayhouse.org/lincoln.

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About GiGi's Playhouse:

GiGi's Playhouse is the ONLY network of Down Syndrome Achievement Centers. Every day, we provide FREE, life-changing therapeutic, educational and career training programs for 30,000+ individuals of all ages. Programs are always available to participants and families despite their skill level or ability to pay. GiGi's Playhouse oversees 33 locations across the United States and in Mexico, as well as start-up teams in over 200 communities nationwide. By offering free programs and through our Generation G Campaign for global acceptance, we EMPOWER families by maximizing opportunities for daily achievement and lasting acceptance. To ensure lasting acceptance, we must show the world what individuals with Down syndrome are truly capable of achieving as students, co-workers, volunteers, friends, and valued members of their communities. Our program outcomes help advance this vital social impact goal. Down syndrome is not a disease and there is no cure. It is the largest chromosomal disability in our country and yet, it is the least funded. At GiGi's Playhouse families are never alone. From a prenatal diagnosis to career skills, we make a lifetime commitment to remain by their side. Families are empowered with all the tools their child needs to succeed! By breaking down barriers and changing the way the world accepts individuals with Down syndrome, we foster a daily mindset of acceptance for everyone.