



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

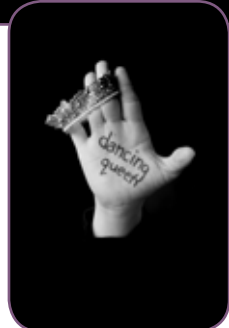
educate. inspire. achieve

# Newsletter



## 'i have a voice' traveling galleries and how you can become one of the million voices

The Des Moines "i have a voice" galleries are completed, and beginning their tours to spread Down syndrome awareness!! We are thrilled that GiGi's Playhouse-Des Moines created two traveling galleries!!!! Our galleries are a part of the "one million voices" campaign aimed to gain over one million new advocates for Down syndrome. The best news of all is that they are now available to be



booked at your location. You can book one or both of the galleries to come to your business, school, event, hospital, etc. For more information on how to reserve the galleries, email onemillionvoicesDSM@gigisplayhouse.org or call 515-252-PLAY. Let's get these galleries out there, so we all can do our part to spread positive awareness and change the world!! For the month of October you can see both of the Des Moines "i have a voice" galleries at Jordan Creek Town Center!



### Dress Down for Down syndrome Awareness Days

Are you interested in hosting a "Dress Down for Down syndrome Awareness Day" at your office? If your place of work would like to host a day to raise funds for Down syndrome please contact us, we will supply you with a packet of information! This is not only a great way for everyone to have fun by dressing down at work, but it spreads Down syndrome Awareness to those you work with! Contact us for information on how you can help support our free family programming at GiGi's Playhouse-Des Moines by hosting a "Dress Down for Down syndrome Awareness Day", email: desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org for more information!

### Celebrate Down syndrome Awareness Month by helping raise funds!

When you stop to see the "i have a voice" Traveling Galleries at Jordan Creek you will want to head to Bang Bang Mongolian Grill (Mills Civic Parkway) on October 9 for the GiGi's Playhouse Fundraiser! Simply give your receipt to a GiGi's Playhouse Volunteer to help support GiGi's Playhouse and a percentage of the sales will go to GiGi's. Tuesday nights kids eat free, so bring the family!



### Younkers Community Days supports GiGi's Playhouse-DSM



You can get your Younkers Community Days Sale Booklets at GiGi's Playhouse now! We are selling these booklets for \$5 each! The best part is GiGi's Playhouse-Des Moines keeps 100% off each booklet we sell! Stop in to purchase your booklets today!

### Local Scentsy Dealer supports GiGi's Playhouse

Go to [www.scentsy.com/fkfin](http://www.scentsy.com/fkfin) and click on the GiGi's Playhouse party during the month of October to order this Special Olympics Scentsy burner and Katie will donate 100% of her profit (\$15 each) to our GiGi's Playhouse!



# “This little girl is going to change people!”

by Jennifer Van Gorp



I can still remember the certainty in Pastor Kevin’s voice when he looked down at our tiny infant daughter in church one Sunday morning and declared, “This little girl is going to change people.” Pastor Kevin was right!

Our daughter Bella has a new pink bike with white training wheels & a personalized nameplate. She has friends who ring our doorbell daily &

ask her to play “house” or Barbies. She has an Olympic gold medal that hangs from her bedroom door. She’s got a big sister who gives her fashion tips & a little brother who loves to torture her. Bella even has a sparkly crown, a 3-foot trophy, and a sash that declares her “2012 Junior Miss You Can Do It.” Oh, and Bella has Down syndrome.

When Isabella Grace was born 11 years ago, my husband & I were crippled with the fear that our lives would never look like those of our friends and loved ones. We knew nothing about Down syndrome & didn’t know a single family who had a child with the same diagnosis. Our comfy little world was rocked to its core, and we were visibly shaken.

It’s hard to believe, then, that when asked to describe our child with just one word, the word that comes to mind is “joy.” Bella is one of those people in this world who just has it—that indescribable quality that draws people to her & makes them want to know her more. She has more friends than I do—kids, adults, college students, senior citizens—and she has an

uncanny ability to remember names. She radiates charisma & warmth and our community has embraced her as one of its most special members. In fact, when she & a friend left town to participate in the Special Olympics last spring, 600(ish) students, teachers & staff members lined her school walls and, equipped with signs, banners, and pompoms, cheered her on to victory. It is one of my most treasured memories because it exemplified human goodness, kindness, acceptance, & love.

Certainly, the road has not always been easy. Bella has had to endure numerous operations including major heart surgery when she was five months old. As a toddler, she would incessantly run away, pull hair, put things in her mouth & dump out the contents of other peoples’ purses. We have faced rejection, frustration, & difficult decisions. Hundreds of hours have been spent in waiting rooms passing time until it was our turn to see the heart doctor, eye doctor, ENT doctor, speech therapists...the list goes on & on. Yes, raising a child with Down syndrome is full of joys & heartache. But then again, the same is true of raising any child. The mountaintops and valleys are just different.

Our family is better for having Bella in it. She makes us laugh & she makes us think. We have met people, attended events, & learned things we never would have without her. She’s not just changed what we do or how we feel, she’s changed who we are. So Pastor Kevin was right. Bella has changed people. She still is. She started with us.





**Congratulations to all of our walkers & runners at the 15th**

**Annual Central Iowa Buddy Walk!**

We had over 95 registered runners this year for the 5k and over 1200 registered walkers for the Buddy Walk! "Carin' for Callen" had over 110 team members and raised approx. \$4600 and "Team Jacob" raised over \$3000 for Down syndrome Awareness! A huge Thank You to the Buddy Walk Committee especially to Andie, Diane &



Laurie for putting much time and effort into every aspect of the event!

**THANK YOU for helping us obtain our Mission & Vision**

Thank You to everyone who supported us at the Buffalo Wild Wings!

Thank You to FBL Financial Group, Inc. for donating office furniture for our Education & Conference Room. This new furniture will allow us more room to educate more learners in our Literacy & Math programs!



Thank You to the Polk County Treasurers Office for the donation of items to fill our pantry!

**No Tricks Just Treats**



Princesses, Pilots, Ladybugs & Angry Birds put on your costume & please join us for a Halloween Bash from 10:30am-Noon on Sat, Oct 27! Please RSVP to [desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:desmoines@gigisplayhouse.org), there will be games such as bowling ghosts, dancing to Halloween

beats, and of course all of the sweet festive treats!

**OCTOBER CALENDAR**

Check out our website at: [www.gigisplayhouse/desmoines!](http://www.gigisplayhouse/desmoines!)

- 1 Language Class, 4:30-5:30pm
- 5 Friday Friends, 7-9pm
- 6 Dance Squad 10-11am  
Ready, Set, Action, 11am-Noon
- 7 Social Boundaries Class, 4-6pm  
*must be pre-registered*
- 12 Open Play, 10-11:30am  
Friday Friends, 7-9pm
- 13 New Parents Group, 9-10am  
Music Class, 10-11am
- 14 Social Boundaries Class, 4-6pm *must be pre-registered*
- 19 Friday Friends, 7-9pm
- 20 Open Play w/ Esther the Therapy Dog, 9:30am
- 20 3-4 Yr Playgroup, 10-11am
- 20 Story & Craft Time w/ Ms Jo, 11am-Noon
- 26 Open Play, 10-11:30am  
Friday Friends, 7-9pm
- 27 Nuestros Angeles, 9-10am  
Halloween Party, 10:30am-Noon

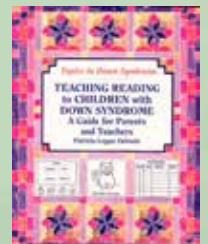


To read more articles about upcoming events check out our online Blog & Facebook!



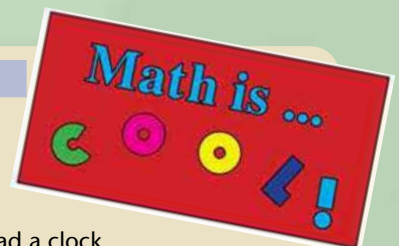
**Fall Literacy Program Update**

Not only does our Literacy Program teach a learner reading skills, it also boosts their confidence! You can enforce good reading habits at home by reading with your child, pointing out sight words in everyday places (billboards, books, restaurants, etc). For more info on Literacy contact: [literacyDSM@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:literacyDSM@gigisplayhouse.org)!



**Math on the Go**

The Math Program is designed to make learner's feel more confident in school & everyday life! If you are interested in having a Learner register or to become a Tutor for our Spring Session email: [mathDSM@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:mathDSM@gigisplayhouse.org); spots are limited. Challenge your learner to think of innovative ways to include Math Concepts at home. You can have your learner help measure ingredients, read a clock, count like items and sort M & M's in groups of 10! There are lots of ways to include Math in your life!



GiGi's Playhouse  
1069 W. Golf Rd.  
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

nonprofit organization

u.s. postage

**paid**

rockford, il

permit no. 745

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## October is Down syndrome Awareness Month

- Oct 9 Bang Bang Night  
Nov 12 Gala Mtg @ 6pm  
Nov 17 Mom's Night Out @ 5-9pm

# 3<sup>rd</sup> annual international gala

one night. nine cities. two countries. your voice.  
save the date!

The 3rd Annual  
**have a voice**  
International Gala  
Saturday, February 23, 2013

GiGi's  
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[www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)

Venues in:  
Chicago  
Sioux City  
New York  
Quad Cities  
Des Moines  
Twin Cities  
Rockford  
Atlanta  
Queretaro, Mexico

Mark your calendars now to be a part of the  
**2013 GiGi's Playhouse 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual International  
Gala for Sat, Feb, 23 here in Des Moines!**

We will be 'rockin' the downtown Des Moines Marriott with dinner, silent and live auctions, raffles, dancing, and Down syndrome awareness! We are planning a few surprises this year to keep you on your toes! Be on the lookout for registration information coming your way! You will want to remind your friends, families, neighbors and co-workers to save the date as well! If you are interested in becoming a part of the Gala Committee join us for a meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month!