



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers  
educate. inspire. believe.



Alyssa Joy

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 6, 2018

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## **Alyssa finds her Voice at GiGi's Playhouse**

### **Sun Prairie family gains comfort and hope at local Down Syndrome Achievement Center**

**Madison, WI** Three-year-old, Alyssa Joy, makes her request for breakfast, "I want to eat oatmeal." This seemingly ordinary sentence has not always been so easy to communicate. Alyssa was born with Down syndrome, and producing speech and language orally has been a significant challenge. Today, with the support of a skilled speech and language pathologist at GiGi's Playhouse, Alyssa uses a high-tech communication device to express her needs and ideas. When Alyssa touches pictures on the computer screen, it speaks for her.

"The "talker" has provided Alyssa so many opportunities, and I'm learning so much about her," shares Nadia, Alyssa's mother. "She is able to ask for what she wants, tell me her preferences, and communicate with people in the community in ways she couldn't before. It has given Alyssa a voice."

Alyssa and her family have been attending GiGi's Playhouse since it opened in Madison in 2016. GiGi's is an achievement center that serves over 190 families of children and adults with Down syndrome by providing *free* educational, therapeutic, and career-training programs. Alyssa attends three programs including LMNOP (Language, Music, N' Our Peeps), a sign language and communication group for young children and their caregivers, one-on-one literacy tutoring, and the Amina Grace speech and language program. The whole family is welcome to participate at GiGi's. "Even though this class is really for Alyssa, we all get to join in," explains Maya and Jackson, Alyssa's older siblings who attend LMNOP with her. "We love going to GiGi's! They have fun toys and we have learned a lot of sign language that we can use with Alyssa."

Most of GiGi's programs are provided by trained volunteers that graciously donate their time. "It's so touching to me that there are so many great volunteers giving their time and talents to make GiGi's what it is," Alyssa's mother shares. "Seeing all of these volunteers investing in lives of individuals with Down syndrome helps me to feel hopeful and optimistic for Alyssa and her future, and I realize that the world embraces her for who she is."

Alyssa's middle name, Joy, seems so fitting today. "I realize there are a lot of tough things that families go through, and at first I thought that having a child with Down syndrome was one of those. Now I realize, for our family, that is definitely not the case," says Joe, Alyssa's father. "Alyssa has opened our hearts to a joy and happiness that we didn't know existed before. She is a bright spot in our lives. We couldn't and wouldn't ever want to imagine our lives without her."

### **Support GiGi's**

If you would like to find out more about GiGi's Playhouse, please visit the website at <https://gigisplayhouse.org/madison/>. Tickets are on sale now for the Roaring 20s themed, "i have a Voice, hear me roar!" Gala on Friday, October 12th, 2018, at 6:00pm at the Sheraton Hotel (Madison, WI). The gala is GiGi's largest and most important fundraiser of the year. Festivities will feature hors d'oeuvres, interactive food stations, and cocktails as well as silent and live auctions, music, dancing, and more. All gala proceeds will support GiGi's ability to provide free, life-changing, therapeutic, educational and career training services to participants and their families. For tickets and sponsorship information, go to <https://gigisplayhouse.org/madison/gala/>

### **More about GiGi's Playhouse**

GiGi's Playhouse was founded by Nancy Gianni in 2003, after her daughter, GiGi, was diagnosed with Down syndrome. GiGi's Playhouse meets the demand for programs that target the underserved population of more than 450,000 Americans living with Down syndrome. GiGi's Playhouse is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that survives completely on charitable donations. Funds raised from the 2018 Gala will enrich children and adults with Down syndrome through vital programs such as speech therapy, one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, fitness classes, career training, social groups, and more. GiGi's Playhouse also works to break down barriers and advance its vision of acceptance for all, through the #GenerationG campaign: Be Accepting. Be Generous. Be Kind. For more information, visit [www.GiGisPlayhouse.org](http://www.GiGisPlayhouse.org).



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