



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

Milwaukee, WI

Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report

GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee

is a place for families. It is a place for community. It is a place where individuals with Down syndrome can come for acceptance and strive to reach their highest achievements. For example, many self-advocates become models of good citizenship by giving back and volunteering their time at GiGi's Playhouse.

It is thanks to these and many other incredible volunteers, a myriad of individual donors, as well as a handful of generous corporate donations that ALL of the programs and services at GiGi's Playhouse are provided for FREE to families -- nothing should hold families back from inspiration!

Mission

GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee is changing the way the world views Down syndrome by providing **FREE** inclusive programming to help our families achieve their **Best of All**.

Vision

To provide a place where individuals with Down syndrome find acceptance and zero barriers to access to our **FREE** educational, therapeutic and social programming.



Letter From the President

Dear Believers,

To say that 2020 was challenging is an understatement. Everyone faced new challenges and situations over this past year. GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee quickly addressed the needs of our participants and offered a bit of shelter during very chaotic times. Just two weeks after the pandemic shut down started in mid-March, we were able to offer virtual GiGi's at Home programming through the national platform. By mid-April, our local Playhouse added a few local programs virtually, providing the opportunity for individuals to socialize with their friends and find familiar programs right from their homes. By summer, our program offerings grew AND we were able to introduce new programs to engage families.

We were blessed with creative thinkers, willing volunteers and a tenacious staff. This enabled us to provide services to even more families, especially teens and adults. The generosity of many donors, community partners, local universities and businesses made this all possible and we are truly grateful for their support.

Personally, I know that my work with GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee enabled me to grow my technical skills, utilize my creativity and offered me a welcome distraction from the turmoil of the pandemic, politics and the racial awakening occurring around us. Part of the GiGi's mission is the Generation G pledge which asks us all to, 'Be accepting, Be generous and Be kind.' This was a welcome message and a great reminder that once you walk through the doors of a GiGi's Playhouse, whether it be virtual or in-person, we are all there to focus on our mission and to help our participants achieve their, 'Best of All'.

We want everyone to know that ALL are welcome at GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee and we continue to adapt our programming and events to suit everyone's ability and level of comfort. We are pleased to offer this snapshot of all that we did over the past year and invite you to visit the Playhouse at any time or check out our website: <https://gigisplayhouse.org/milwaukee/>.

Sincerely,




2020 At-A-Glance



**PURPOSEFUL
PROGRAMS**

**NEARLY
2,800**

academic, therapeutic
& social
programming hours

MILWAUKEE
PLAYHOUSE #22
OPENED

3/21/2015

6 years ago on
World Down
Syndrome Day

**GIGI'S
MILWAUKEE
WELCOMED**

36

NEW
FAMILIES

**GiGi's
Playhouse™**

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Milwaukee, WI

**CELEBRATES
COMMUNITY**

Milwaukee = 187
Ozaukee = 54
Racine = 13
Sheboygan = 11
Washington = 18
Waukesha = 65

Families in local
counties

Across the
U.S. & in Mexico

50

Playhouses are
open in 2020

109

unique
participants

joined our 19
different programs
last year

56

VOLUNTEERS

**donated
1,425**

hours last year

Making The Best of 2020

"It's awesome and I exercise my muscles. At GiGi's, I make friends."

Noah Waldkirch
GiGi Fit Participant



Anaiya and Hunter enjoying GiGi's annual Dance Around the Diamond at Concordia University.



Families got creative at our outdoor Art Explosion program.

"Ryan truly enjoys GiGiFit Teen. It brings a smile to his face every Saturday morning."

Ann, Ryan's mom



Over 100 people participated in the national Step to Accept event in June 2020.



Chad enjoyed making sesame chicken and broccoli during our virtual GiGi Kitchen.

EDUCATE

INSPIRE

BELIEVE

The promise GiGi's Playhouse makes to our community is a lifetime commitment. 2020 tried to test our ability to deliver FREE programming for Individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community BUT our transition to virtual programming and the launching of #GiGisAtHome just 10 days after the shut down in March 2020 has allowed us to keep our promise! We need your help to continue growing the accessibility and tools families have available to them while participating in virtual and limited in-person #freeprograms. Learn more, and support GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee today.



Teen-Tastic Program Leaders, Katie and Taylor

Both Katie and Taylor attend the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and are in the Masters of Science Occupational Therapy Program. Katie decided to become a volunteer at GiGi's Playhouse because she strongly believes in the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for people with Down syndrome and their families.

She loves being a volunteer. It is so rewarding to see the joy the programs give to participants and their families. Some of her favorite activities at Teen Tastic have been playing online bingo, having virtual

dance parties, and trivia challenges. Taylor recently moved to the Milwaukee area and heard about GiGi's Playhouse and the Teen Tastic program from another student who volunteers. She thought it sounded like a lot of fun! Taylor enjoys coming up with themes, unique games and activities to try out and getting to know all the Teen Tastic participants.

Teen Tastic focuses on building social skills with friends with and without Down syndrome by participating in team-based activities in a casual and fun setting. Skill development includes understanding compromise, turn-taking, and problem-solving abilities.



"It is so rewarding to see the joy the programs give to participants and their families."

Taylor
Teen-Tastic Program Leader



Thank You
to our local universities
for your volunteers & leadership!

Our 2020 virtual, COVID-friendly event was made possible by YOU!



The David R. Griscom Family
The Hewes Family



Join us October 23rd for our 5th annual Brew HaHa!
Sponsorships available now for our hybrid in-person & virtual event

We Need YOU!

GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee relies on our community volunteers. YOU can help in a variety of ways!

Volunteer and Tutor Coordinator – help make sure our volunteers are well trained organized and happy!

Program Leaders – we will train you!

Committee Positions – event planning, program direction, donor relations and advisory boards.

Board Members – our board works hard to keep our Playhouse functioning. Current needs include marketing and programming.



Our donors are RIVETING!



\$5,000 and above

Anonymous Fund of the
Jewish Community Foundation
Bader Philanthropies, Inc.
John Hewes

- ★ Anthony and Ann Jasen
- ★ Kohl's Hometown Giving Program
- ★ Stackner Family Foundation

\$1,000 and above

Erin and Joel Anderson
Benevity
General Electric
Barry and Penny Goldman
David Griscom
John and Casey Kulka
Norine Nazareth
Network for Good
Nicolet High School
Northwestern Mutual Foundation

- ★ Jim and Sue Pelikan
- Smiles for Life Foundation
- Tito's Vodka
- United Way of Greater Milwaukee
- Jonathan and Sara Van Deurzen
- Lynda and Michael Wachter
- Mike and Andi Zimmerman
- Katherine Zvesper

Susan Waldkirch
receives check
Kris Barger
(bank fivenine)



\$500 and above

Nick and Kristin Anson
Carey and Kari Dyer
Bob and Nancy Fetherston
Megan and Christopher Fetherston
Maud and Fred Hickey
Lauren Holden
Zain and Rebecca Kaj
Val and Karen Keiper

Christine Kelpine
Ann Kulka
My Choice Family Care, Inc.
James and Rikkina Pulliam
Suzette Roddy
★ Ray and Patricia VandenHouten
Randy and Chris VandenHouten
Jerome and Lori Washburn
Heidi Wellner
Margaret Wrenn Hickey

★ Stars indicate Believers who received a new or larger star in 2020 on our GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee donor wall.
We are so grateful for all our 2020 donors!

**Serving
Milwaukee
County
AND BEYOND!**



There is still so much more to do. Without more actions to create lasting acceptance, opportunities for present and future generations will falter. Our kids never get to take a break from their diagnosis. Therefore, we will not stop fighting for them.

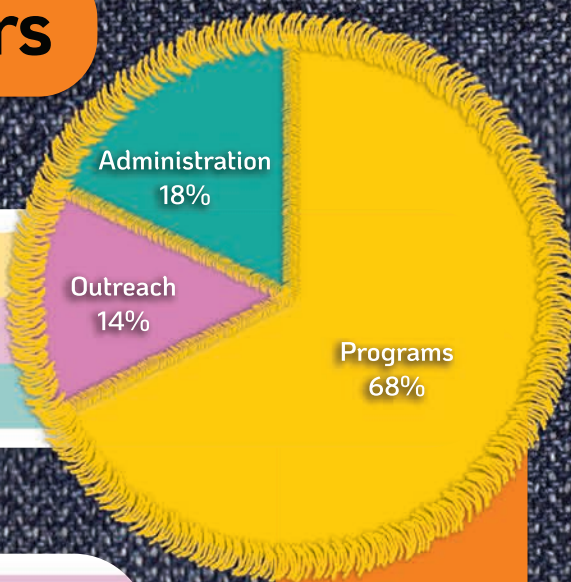
By The Numbers

Revenue



Programs	\$110,499
Outreach	\$23,616
Administration	\$29,411

Contributions	\$55,206
In-Kind Donations	\$12,372
Events	\$55,969
Grants	\$75,110



Expenses

Meet Our Playhouse Staff

Sara Van Deurzen

GiGi's Milwaukee relies on our dedicated staff. Sara, our resident data wonk & creative thinker, works tirelessly to keep our programs accessible & relevant to our participants during a difficult time. We are grateful that Sara brings her education background, creativity and organizational skills to our Playhouse. Thank you to our Operations Director for keeping the ship afloat!



Sue Schrader

Sue joined us late in 2020 and is on a mission to grow our Playhouse. As Executive Director, Sue will be taking on the responsibilities of outreach, marketing of the Playhouse, fundraising and donor relations. We look forward to introducing Sue to everyone soon!



Heather Minsky

Heather joined us just days before the pandemic caused us to close. She has been instrumental in coordinating our volunteers and virtual programming. We are fortunate that she has been able to apply her education background and understanding of what our participants need to provide so many crucial programs.



Lifeline in a Time of COVID

GiGi's virtual At Home programming was a lifeline for Jake, age 13, who had been enjoying so many programs. He loved his first week of GiGi's Kitchen learning useful kitchen skills with Chef Becky from the Secret Oven and even hosted his own "Kitchen Show" later that night for his family. Jake also participated in one-to-one math tutoring with Natalie, a student from Marquette University. In the summer of 2020, he was working on staying focused without getting too silly. He improved his counting and addition skills and made patterns and identified shapes. Jake was so excited to play interactive math games with his tutor each week. He has also enjoyed the other virtual programs offered by the Milwaukee Playhouse such as Teen Tastic and GiGIFIT Teen. Having programs available in person is best, but Jake is doing very well and is gaining independence through the virtual At Home options!

At Home programs supported people of all ages with Down syndrome & peers during the pandemic. Through purposeful programs designed to support the individual needs of each participant, our community is thriving!



Learning Through Play

Elise is one of the many participants in our One-to-One Tutoring program. Throughout the fall session, Elise worked on her literacy skills, specifically areas such as comprehension, compound words, syllables, and blending. Elise gave her Best of All as she read and matched compound words, clapped and counted syllables when reading. Every week she is busy working hard playing and learning! Elise's tutor, Kelly, a local volunteer says that Elise is a joy to be around and she enjoys time spent with her! Kelly even discovered that playing games is a great way to keep Elise engaged. Throughout a few weeks in the session, they read the "I Say -ay" book. Kelly said that she was really impressed that Elise got through that book and that she could read the majority of the book herself with very little prompting! They also did a few reading comprehension questions at the end and again Elise was a rock star! Kelly adds that it's been such a pleasure getting to know her!

Our FREE 1:1 Literacy and 1:1 Math programs are specifically designed for individuals with Down syndrome ages 3 through adulthood. Trained volunteers teach along with purposeful progressions that build confidence and mastery. Families are provided with practical activities to continue learning at home.



Emily Finds Her "Best of All"

At GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee, you can see Emily each week in our fall programs! She is a member of Book Club, Fantastic Friends, and GiGIFIT Adult. Each week, Emily comes to these programs ready to participate, try new things, and lead by example. Recently, Emily demonstrated her Best Of All as she lead her Book Club to victory at Hangman, gave her all during her work out at GiGIFIT, and had some fun conversations while creating some Harry Potter art at Fantastic Friends. The Program Leaders and friends look forward to seeing her every week!

GiGi's has played an important role in Emily's life. In addition to being a place where she has made many friends, she is becoming more confident & independent.



Board of Directors



Susanne G. Pelikan

President



Barry Goldman

Vice President



Mike Wachter

Treasurer



Erin Anderson

Secretary



Ann Jasen

Board Member



Griffin Gross

Board Member



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Virtually Visit Us! <https://gigisplayhouse.org/milwaukee/>



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