

Celebrate

our
accomplishments!

GiGi's
Playhouse™

Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

Milwaukee, WI



2023 Annual Impact Report

Celebrate our mission



Our **COMMUNITY** where families and individuals with Down syndrome and all abilities can come together for acceptance and strive to reach their highest potential.

Our **MISSION** is to change the way the world views Down syndrome by offering FREE programming to individuals with Down syndrome and their families in a warm and welcoming family atmosphere.

Our **VISION** is to expand our footprint within the Milwaukee community to become a premier source for individuals and families with Down syndrome to get educational, life-skills and community support – to provide a place where individuals with Down syndrome are accepted and embraced in their families, schools and communities.

"I still remember ... it was during our first visit at Children's Wisconsin, after Elise was born. We were overwhelmed with all the information, but among the wonderful resources, one stood out. Beautiful pictures showing love, hope and acceptance. It was the folder about GiGi's Playhouse! It took some months but we made it to our first GiGi's Playhouse event. The outdoor picnic in June 2021 – Elise was only 3 months, and we loved meeting the families and most importantly how welcoming, joyful and accepting everyone were. We then decided to try the GiGiFIT Infant and then the GiGiFIT Toddlers, and then teamed up for the GiGiFIT Acceptance Challenge, and we just kept coming back! Elise is now 3. She smiles when she comes to the Playhouse. Her brother loves playing and making new friends. We are grateful beyond words for GiGi's Playhouse and everyone who supports and contributes to the mission of positive awareness of Down Syndrome and acceptance for all. It changed our life." – Yaidi, mom to Elise

Celebrate our connections

Dear Believers -

This year marks a transition for our Playhouse, with outgoing Board President Sue Pelikan passing the baton to incoming President Erin Anderson. It takes a lot of teamwork to lead an organization like GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee. We have so many accomplishments to celebrate, and we both are excited for what the future holds.

Sue's four years as President oversaw tremendous growth. We added weekly one-on-one speech therapy through our connections with Marquette University, we launched an entire suite of GiGiFIT programs for every age level thanks to a grant from Kohl's Cares, we added staff and grew our budget by nearly 150 percent to increase our impact in the Down syndrome community. Every day at GiGi's, a child is learning to communicate more clearly, gaining confidence to be included in their classrooms through math and literacy tutoring, and forging friendships that will last a lifetime. Teens and adults are gaining independence, leading healthy lifestyles, and attaining skills that will serve them well in their community and potential employment. And they're all showing their Best of All!

Yet, none of this happens without building connections. The college partnerships we've forged with Marquette, UW-Milwaukee, Carroll University, Mount Mary University, and more have built a pipeline of volunteers to lead our signature programs. Nonprofit collaborations with Rainbow Day Camp, DSAW, Friendship Circle, St. Francis Children's Center, and the Autism Society allow GiGi's to provide events and resources to take a holistic approach to serving our families.

As president of an organization like GiGi's Milwaukee, our work is a labor of love and completely rewarding. We take great pride in serving our families and celebrate each and every participant who walks through our doors. We invite you to come join us – serving on the board, joining a committee, leading a program, or hosting a party – these are the connections that help us to grow even more. Plus, volunteering for GiGi's is just a lot of FUN! No matter who is at the helm, we'll both be dedicated to GiGi's success in 2024, creating connections, and celebrating every success large and small!



Sincerely,

Erin Anderson & Sue Pelikan

The New & Past Presidents



2023 At-A-Glance

PURPOSEFUL PROGRAMS

4,000+

academic, therapeutic & social programming hours

GIGI'S MILWAUKEE #22 OPENED

3/21/2015

8 years ago on World Down Syndrome Day

GIGI'S MILWAUKEE WELCOMED

47

NEW FAMILIES

CELEBRATES COMMUNITY

425 Families in Wisconsin

527 Families in total

Across the U.S. & in Mexico

58

Playhouses were open in 2023

145

unique DS participants

joined our 30 different virtual & in-person programs

232 VOLUNTEERS

donated 2,645 hours in 2023



Celebrate our year



Over 200 supporters joined us for the **Dash for Down Syndrome** in May. This year's 5K/1 mile walk will be held on May 5, 2024.

The 2023 **Brew HaHa** featured a VIP Tasting at the Historic Pabst Brewery. Join us for fun, beer tasting and more on October 24, 2024!



Families from DSAW and GiGi's enjoyed a lovely fall day exploring and playing at Blue Lotus Farms



Participants of all ages kicked off the holiday season with a special visitor. The afternoon included cookies and a story.



GiGiFIT isn't just a work out, it's a lot of FUN too!



Families got to explore the Milwaukee airport, thanks to a collaboration with Delta Airlines and General Mitchell Airport.



Register through the calendar with your My GiGi's Account. Need help? Contact us at (414) 797-0522 or email programs@milwaukee.gigisplayhouse.org

Programs at
GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee
<https://gigisplayhouse.org/milwaukee/sfcalendar/>

Ages 0-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-17	Ages 18+
	• GiGiFIT (Infants, Toddlers, Kids, Teens & Adults)			
	• 1:1 Tutoring in Math and Literacy (Book Club for Teens & Adults)			
	• 1:1 or group Amina Grace Speech and Language			• GiGi Prep
LMNOP		• GiGi Kitchen (Kids, Teens, Adults)		
Leaps & Bounds		Kids Club	TeenTastic	Fantastic Friends

• = Session applications (spots may fill up!)

Fitness Academic Therapeutic Social Job skills



What inspired you to volunteer at GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee? During the pandemic, my brother invited me to join Fantastic Friends. In Fantastic Friends, I discovered a great group of people who liked talking about cheese curds, stand-up comedy, Taylor Swift, and The Descendants – a lot of my favorite things!

Tell us how you have volunteered? "Volunteering" is a bit of a misnomer – I view my time at GiGi's as hanging out with friends at Fantastic Friends or discussing Holes,

The Wild Robot or whatever our latest read is at Book Club. I have participated with GiGi's since 2020.

Have you enjoyed your time at GiGi's and what have you gained through your volunteer time there? I've loved my time at GiGi's and am so grateful for all of the fantastic friends it has given me. Without GiGi's, I likely would not have made these connections, highlighting a significant issue: the artificial divisions we often face due to a lack of inclusion. I have personally experienced the positive impact of GiGi's mission to unite people and foster acceptance. It's a philosophy I try to apply to all facets of my life.

-Jane Van Eerden

Volunteer leader of Fantastic Friends and Book Club



Sister and brother duo, Jane and Matt Van Eerden, giving the keynote speech at our 2023 Brew HaHa

University

Community

Corporate

GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee is pleased to be 99% volunteer run. We enjoy meeting volunteers from many different age groups, professions and communities. There is no way to adequately show our appreciation for these gifts of time.

Celebrate our volunteers

Participants ages 12-18 enjoyed a summer week at Rainbow Day Camp. Campers got to enjoy all of the camp amenities from swimming to games and gardening. Teen volunteers from a local high school helped make this week fun for all!



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

Milwaukee, WI

You can also help by joining our team of volunteers!

Tutors – Tutoring a child for one hour a week is one of the most rewarding ways to give back. We will help train and supply all the materials you need for success.

Program Leaders – Help lead one of our fantastic programs!

Committee Members – Event planning, program direction, donor relations and outreach.

Advisory Board – Perfect for community members interested in helping out behind the scenes but not quite ready for a full board commitment.

Celebrate our FREE programs

“Since joining the GiGiFIT Infants and Toddlers program in 2021, our son Baz, now four years old, has made incredible progress in many developmental areas. Notably, achieving independent walking was a significant milestone, and he has surpassed this goal by not only walking but having the improved balance and coordination needed to run, which he loves to do. Baz’s confidence with stair navigation has also vastly improved, further strengthening his mobility, stability, and safety awareness. We love GiGi’s Playhouse and the GiGiFIT program not only for all of the positive developments we’ve seen in Baz and the positive relationships he has formed, but also for providing a supportive community for parents to connect and share experiences.”

– Michelle, mom to Baz



GiGiFIT Infant and Toddlers is a session-based program designed to make movement fun! Parents and participants are introduced to foundational movements, mobility, visual-vestibular and reflex integration activities. Classes are set in a fun environment and encourage purposeful progression through activities in strength, endurance, joint stability, balance, movement control and more.

The **Amina Grace Speech** with Marquette is a collaboration with Marquette University’s Speech Pathology and Audiology Department. This one-on-one and small group program provides participants of all ages the opportunity to expand their speech and language skills. Clinicians and participants work on speech clarity, enunciation, word order and comprehension. These skills benefit self-confidence, school readiness and increased independence.



“Our 3 year old son Myron has gained independence, is singing along to more songs, is making more sounds, and is imitating more words. Miss Fiona and Ms. Jen are always coming up with fun activities to keep my son engaged and his sister loves to come along and play.”

– Kristy, mom to Myron

“Because of Gigi’s Kitchen, my cooking skills have improved a lot, I use the oven and stove at home more. This program also helped with teaching me about food categories and how to be independent.”

– Mary Cate Neff, participant



The **GiGi’s Kitchen** program is designed to emphasize the importance of a healthy lifestyle and practical cooking skills. Participants engage in activities designed to promote healthy eating habits, kitchen safety, food preparation skills, self-confidence and social skills while they prepare and enjoy a shared meal/snack..

Art Explosion is a great way to work on fine motor skills!



Fantastic Friends getting their green on for St. Patrick’s Day

Making hard work fun at **Leaps and Bounds!**

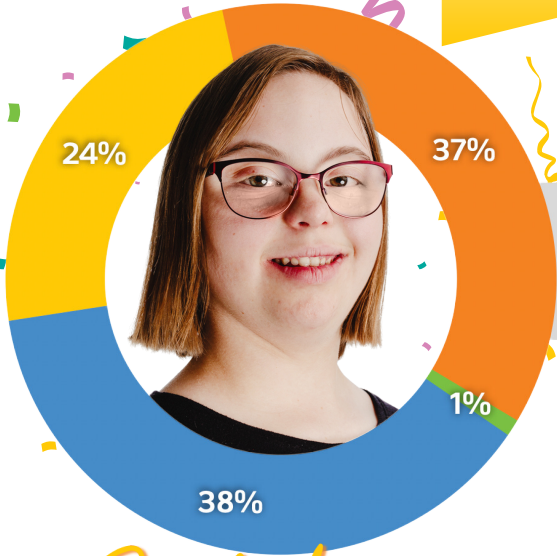


Siblings enjoy the baby animals at **Destination Discovery**. Fun for all!

BY THE NUMBERS

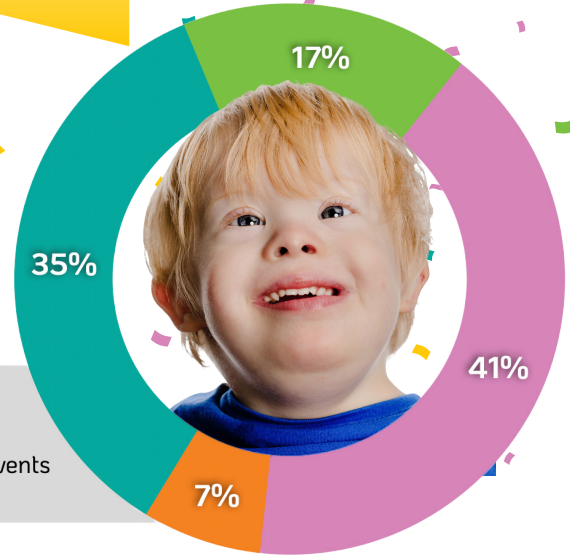
INCOME

EXPENSES



- Grants
- Donations
- Fundraisers
- Miscellaneous

- Payroll
- Facilities
- Programming/Marketing/Events
- National Support



Celebrate our success

In November, our board and staff attended the National Conference in Illinois. There, we were honored to receive a Core Champions Award for being Locally Concerned and Enterprise Minded. We also received recognition for being a Standards of Execution Champion. It is rewarding to see our hard work be recognized!



Celebrate our staff

As 2023 wrapped up, we were thrilled to have a full and functioning staff. While we rely on volunteers to run programs, events and fundraisers, it is our staff that make the magic happen.



Sara Van Deurzen – Sara has served as our Operations Director for the last five years. She manages the staff, reports directly to the board and is often the first point of contact for our families. Our resident keeper of the data, Sara is up to date on everything that goes on behind the scenes at the Playhouse, whether it be creating a new program, tracking down a donation or helping a new family navigate our website and program registration.

Jim Pulliam – Jim joined us in September as our Program and Volunteer Coordinator. He jumped right in to help support and improve our existing programs, train and welcome new volunteers and engage with participants on their program needs. He brings excellent organizational skills and a passion for our mission.

Marie Burrows – Marie has been our part-time Marketing Coordinator for the past few years. She brings a creative spirit and fun enthusiasm to the Playhouse. Marie currently helps market our fundraisers, identify our marketing needs and keeps our brochures and publications fresh and up to date.

Celebrate our believers

\$10,000+

Anonymous Donor
Bader Philanthropies, Inc.
*Frank & Lucielle Puncer Foundation, Inc
*Harri Hoffmann Family Foundation, Inc.
Anthony & Ann Jasen

General Plastics, Inc.
Gigi MKE Boutique
Barry & Penny Goldman
Garrett Holmes & Jillian Holschuh
Dan Hurrle
*Jasen Wealth Advisors
John & Casey Kulka
Lincoln Contractors Supply
Bridget Loftus
Madison Investments
Moerschel Consulting
*Jeffrey & Ginger Moerschel
*Nicolet High School
*North Shore Congregational Church

Lynda & Michael Wachter
We Energies Foundation, Inc.
Wilo USA
Wispect Foundation
Andi & Mike Zimmerman

Bill Innis
Johnson Controls
Brent & Nicole Johnson
Annette Kappler
Christine Kelpine
Yusef & Michelle Khan
Raymond Kroll

\$5,000+

*Amina Grace Memorial Fund Inc.
*Anon Charitable Trust
*Neff Family Charitable Giving Fund
James & Susanne Pelikan

Jeff Plaster
James Pulliam
Rikkina Pulliam
Schloemer Law Firm, S.C.
Smiles for Life Foundation
Sock Club
Socksmit
Stormonth Elementary School
Tito's Handmade Vodka
Sally & Mike Tomsicek
Cathy Tonnacliff
*Randy & Chris VandenHouten
Zach Vander Grinten

\$500+

Amy's Candy Kitchen INC
John Archibal
Becky & Dave Archibald
Brenda Arnett
Bella Via Dance Studio, LLC
Blue Q
Mary & Eric Bolander
Brian and Rebekah Wickert Family Foundation
Philip Buchwald
Eladio Cancel
Elite Sports Club - Brookfield
Nancy Fetherston
Andrea J Fetherston
Martha Flaherty
Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation
Liz Girsch
Joseph Goode
Calli & Tom Guay
Anne & Tim Gustafson
Wendy & Brad Heintz

James Kuchler
Mark Leitner
Les Moise
McCue Dental
MGW Law
Molina Healthcare of Wisconsin, Inc.
Karmen Nenahlo
Michael Ota
Project Grace Foundation
Zach Pulliam
Heidi & Andrew Rowley
Sally Smaida & Andrew Youel
The David and Aimee Gibson Giving Back Fund
*Sara Van Deurzen
Carl Vopal
Darrin Wiest
Tim Zimmer

\$1,000+

Allspring Global Investments
Erin & Joel Anderson
*Nick & Kristin Anson
*Mary & Dan Aschenbrener
Baird Private Wealth Management - Drosner Phillips Ristau Group
Bank Five Nine
Benevity
Yaidi Cancel Martinez & Alonzo Jalan
Chris Crain & Lisa Davis
Megan Zintek-Daczyk

*** Indicates a Believer who received a new or larger star in 2023 on our donor wall**

Celebrate our community



Calling all Sponsors and Corporate Supporters! We invite you to show your support for our mission to change the way the world views Down syndrome and acceptance for all. Your once-yearly donation includes sponsorship benefits at the Dash for Down Syndrome (May), Fashion Show and Party (July), and Brew HaHa (October). As a Friend of GiGi's, you can get tickets to the events, logo inclusion, national recognition, and much more!

Stormonth Elementary School in Fox Point stepped up again to pledge their acceptance for all. Students and families participated in a variety of school based activities as part of our GiGiFIT Acceptance Challenge and Dash for Down Syndrome. Students raised over \$5,500. For more about our GenG pledge and how your company or school can be part of an accepting community: iacceptyou.org,





Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

Milwaukee, WI

8685 N. Port Washington Road
Milwaukee, WI 53217
(414) 797-0522



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



New board members are always welcome! Board members meet monthly and lead committee efforts for finance, engagement, events, marketing, fundraising and donor relations. It is a great way to use your hidden and professional skills.



Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Impact Report

Board Members (from left to right): Barry Goldman, Erin Kogler, Erin Anderson, Becky Archibald, Ann Jansen, Sue Pelikan, Mike Wachter



Milwaukee, WI

Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

