

# GiGi's Playhouse™

Down Syndrome Achievement Centers  
educate. inspire. believe.

New Orleans, LA



## 2023 Annual Report



New Orleans, LA  
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# GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans

## **Our Mission and Purpose:**

To change the way the world views Down syndrome and to send a global message of acceptance for all.

## **Our Vision:**

To see a world where individuals with Down syndrome are accepted and embraced in their families, schools and communities.

## **Our Niche:**

We change lives through consistent delivery of free educational, therapeutic-based and career development programs for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and our community.

## **Our Promise:**

A lifetime commitment to families.

GiGi Gianni,  
the inspiration for the GiGi's  
Playhouse Down Syndrome  
Achievement Center  
international network with  
GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans  
Board President  
Bob Kimbro



# GiGi's Playhouse Programs



“Working at GiGi’s Playhouse allows me to witness the incredible potential and unique strengths of individuals with Down syndrome every day. It’s profoundly rewarding to be part of a supportive community where we celebrate each achievement and empower each person to reach their fullest potential. I love working with our volunteers because their passion and dedication bring so much energy and joy to our center. Their commitment to supporting and empowering individuals with Down syndrome makes a profound difference, and together, we create a truly inclusive and uplifting community.”

- Annie Watkins, GiGi’s Playhouse Site Manager

**A total of 78 individuals with Down syndrome and 80 of their family members participated in 1,707 program hours at GiGi's NOLA in 2023!**

**Below we highlight new programs that have launched since our last annual report.**

## Achievers

The GiGi’s Achievers program is a new program that empowers adults with Down syndrome with purposeful activities to ensure continued learning and fulfillment of life. This program teaches and promotes communication, self-awareness, independence, health and wellness through community engagement. Each lesson provides participants with “hands on” learning experiences in a naturally occurring environment.

## Leaps & Bounds

Leaps & Bounds is a play-based program for young children that focuses on success in preschool and kindergarten. Children practice fun and engaging activities that provide opportunities for following routines, small group participation, movement, and interaction with their environment. Family members are key participants in this program and encourage their child to reach his or her Best of All throughout each session.





## GiGi's Kitchen

The GiGi's Kitchen program is designed to emphasize the importance of a healthy lifestyle and provide early exposure to practical cooking skills. Participants engage in activities designed to promote healthy eating habits, kitchen safety awareness, food preparation skills, self-confidence, and social skills by applying learned skills as they prepare and enjoy a shared meal or snack!



## TeenTastic

During the summer of 2023, GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans launched TeenTastic which 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.

## One-on-One Math Tutoring

GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans piloted and launched the One-on-One Math Tutoring program during 2022-2023! Building math skills for individuals with Down syndrome increases independence in their school, in the community, and in the workplace. The aim of this program is to help promote a positive experience of learning mathematics with a sound foundation of basic number understanding. Trained tutors work at the level of the learners, continually challenging and encouraging them to reach their Best of All.

## Coming soon . . .

GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans has received generous funding from the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust to pilot the Amina Grace Speech Therapy program! Funds will be used for hiring a Speech Language Pathologist. We need a volunteer coordinator for the speech program. Please email [volunteerneworleans@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:volunteerneworleans@gigisplayhouse.org).







GIGI'S PLAYHOUSES

- Copy & Copy
- Play House
- Music & Fun
- Learning
- Reading
- Art & Craft
- More Fun

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 PROGRAM  
 Craig  
 Blackburn  
 Director of Operations & Program Development

Gigi's Playhouse  
 Resource Library



# GiGiFIT

## ACCEPTANCE CHALLENGE

*A Physical and Social Movement for Acceptance*

Our 2023 GiGiFIT Acceptance Challenge and Crawfish Boil was a fun, exciting, and inclusive experience that, joined with the GiGiFit events across the GiGi's Playhouse network, promoted a worldwide message of Acceptance for All!



### #Generation G

GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. created the website [iacceptyou.org](http://iacceptyou.org) where everyone can take the pledge to **Be Accepting. Be Generous. Be Kind.**

Be a part of the growing numbers of supporters who say, "I can and will accept you as you are."







# GiGi's Playhouse Volunteers

"I think that one of the best parts of being a volunteer-run organization is that GiGi's Playhouse gives members of our local community, who might not have a chance otherwise, the opportunity to interact with and befriend people with Down syndrome. As Nancy Gianni likes to say, 'GiGi's Playhouse prepares people with Down syndrome for the world, and it prepares the world for people with Down syndrome.'"

- Lory Lewis, GiGi's Playhouse  
New Orleans Board Vice-President  
and Volunteer Coordinator



A total of 194 volunteers contributed 1,927+ hours of program, special event, and administrative support in 2023! GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans would not exist without our volunteers!



## We love our volunteers!

Our wonderful volunteers come from many walks of life from high schoolers to retirees. We are especially proud that many of our volunteers at GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans are individuals with Down syndrome! GiGi's Playhouse is proud to practice inclusion through example.





# GiGi's Playhouse Special Events

2023 was full of fun: World Down Syndrome Day with DSAGNO, 2nd Annual Golf Tournament, special performers and volunteer groups, and local book author readings



"GiGi's is truly an achievement center where participants are not competing with others, but they are being the best they can be. All programs are free to participants. I have seen significant growth in the participants and love observing them feeling comfortable being themselves. They are proud of their progress and look forward to all events at GiGi's. Please visit some of the programs and think about supporting through volunteering or a material or monetary contribution. You will truly be making a difference in the lives of others."

- Pat Ehrle, GiGi's Playhouse Program Volunteer







# GiGi's Playhouse Lagniappe Gala

The 2023 Lagniappe Gala, presented by the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust, was an incredible night of celebrating "A Little Something Extra" - the extra 21st chromosome that makes our friends with Down syndrome extraordinary!



“Whenever anyone asks me about GiGi’s, my response is: ‘GiGi’s is where I belong.’ We have amazing volunteers that support us individually and as a group. We are welcomed when we walk into the door with a big smile. It is so much fun to be with our friends and learn a new task in the kitchen or a new exercise move. GiGi’s has so many programs, and from birth to beyond you can receive service free of charge. When you walk into GiGi’s, you and your family connect with others who have been friends for a long time, and you make new friends. You just feel like you belong.”

- Tess Landry, GiGi’s Playhouse Participant and 2023 Lagniappe Gala keynote speaker







**GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans Down Syndrome Achievement Center**  
**Summarized Unaudited\* Financial Statements**  
**For the years ended December 31, 2023 and 2022**

**Summarized Statement of Financial Position**

	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Current Assets	\$96,330	\$81,566
Total Assets	\$191,774	\$230,121
Total Liabilities	\$119,671	\$145,402
Total Net Assets	\$72,103	\$84,719
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$191,774	\$230,121

**Summarized Statement of Activities**

	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Total Support & Revenue	\$207,198	\$198,878
Total Costs	\$219,814	\$202,462
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	(\$12,616)	(\$3,584)

\*The finances of GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans is audited as part of the GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. network financial statement audit which will be completed Fall 2024.

GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans EIN # 85-0503069 is a subordinate of GiGi's Playhouse Alliance EIN #46-2014837, Group #5402. GiGi's Playhouse Alliance is under the parent company GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. EIN #20-0058563, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. All donations to GiGi's Playhouse New Orleans are fully tax-deductible.



**For more information or volunteer opportunities, please reach out to us!**

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Metairie, LA 70001  
504-321-6770**

**[neworleans@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:neworleans@gigisplayhouse.org)  
[gigisplayhouse.org/neworleans](http://gigisplayhouse.org/neworleans)**

**Our achievements could not be accomplished without the support of GiGi's Playhouse, Inc. national network.  
[www.gigisplayhouse.org](http://www.gigisplayhouse.org)**





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