

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicagoland Charity Paying it Forward and Accepts #IceBucketChallenge | GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Centers

HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL – August 18, 2014 – GiGi University student Aubrey and Hugs + Mugs intern Brian accepted the Ice Bucket Challenge. Joined by GiGi's team members Sarah Rickaby and Jayne Drew, the foursome were caught on [video](#) paying it forward. The participants not only challenged some of their friends, but also two of GiGi's other 16 playhouse Locations. Will **GiGi's Playhouse - Des Moines** and **GiGi's Playhouse - Twin Cities** accept the challenge?

On social media, it has been nearly impossible to escape the Ice Bucket Challenge videos and photos of people dumping ice water over their heads. When Hugs + Mugs intern Brian Rogala was challenged by his Uncle Enzy, he solicited the help of fellow GiGi's participant Aubrey Soukup and brought the idea to the GiGi's Playhouse team.

"At GiGi's Playhouse, adults with Down syndrome are fortunate to be able to participate in the innovative GiGi University and Hugs + Mugs programs which is catapulting their self-confidence, physical fitness, nutrition, self-advocacy and career skills to new heights", says Antonella Rogala, Program Director of the Hugs + Mugs internship program. "Brian felt strongly that it would be a great idea to show thanks for our own blessings and were happy to pay it forward to support the ALS movement."

GiGi's Playhouse celebrates the many achievements of individuals and their families, develops new programs to benefit our participants, and works tirelessly to change society's outdated perceptions about the amazing potential of individuals with Down syndrome. At GiGi's, adults with Down syndrome are able to participate in the innovative and much needed GiGi U and Hugs + Mugs programs which is catapulting their self-confidence, physical fitness, nutrition, self-advocacy and career skills to new heights.

"We are so proud of the accomplishment of all of our GiGi's participants and their families, and are delighted that Brian and Aubrey felt strongly to make this show of support" says Nancy Gianni, Founder of GiGi's Playhouse. "Of course, both of them did nominate me to accept the Ice Bucket Challenge – so stay tuned."

Find the video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH7ZkRySBgg. A donation to ALS will be made via the **Les Turner ALS Foundation of Chicago**. For additional information and to donate to **GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Centers** please see gigisplayhouse.org.

About GiGi's Playhouse: *GiGi's Playhouse is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization founded in 2003. GiGi's Playhouse is a series of unique Achievement Centers serving children and adults with Down syndrome. Each Playhouse makes a lifetime commitment to participants and their families, and each location provides unique educational and therapeutic programs in a format that individuals with Down syndrome learn best. All programs aim to maximize acceptance and self-confidence, and intend to empower children and adults to achieve their greatest potential. All educational, therapeutic and career training programs are offered to families at no charge. GiGi's Playhouse currently has 16 Playhouses in the US and Mexico. Plans are in place to bring the total number of Playhouses to 30 by the end of 2015. Last year, over 16,000 participants benefited from Playhouse programs. GiGi's Playhouse has been featured on **NBC Nightly News** with Kate Snow and Tom Brokaw's "An American Story" Radio Show.*

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