

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicagoland Charity Launches V-21 Vitamin Cookie | GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Awareness Centers

HOFFMAN ESTATES, IL - July 14, 2014 – Hugs+ Mugs Gift Shop and Café is a retail store that provides GiGi University graduates a live internship to provide them with individualized, hands on training to hone their skills and prepare them for fulfilling community based employment. Hugs+ Mugs offers the public to create their own custom made mugs and water bottles with the assistance of our interns. Additionally, shoppers can stop in and buy mugs and other gift items designed by adults with Down syndrome. Participants oversee all aspects of the store and lead the mug design and production processes.

In the spirit of GiGi's Playhouse's global message of acceptance, Hugs+Mugs is designed to be visible and active participant of the community. Illustrating this point, Hugs+Mugs is thrilled to have partnered with local bakery American Baking Company, to introduce the **V-21 Vitamin Cookie**. Hugs+Mugs newest creation is packed with 21 vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and most importantly, LOVE by our bakers with T21 (Down syndrome). The interns arrive at the bakery weekly excited to learn and increase their skills. The reviews have been great and the cookies are flying off the shelves, and were on the menu at the South Barrington Park District's July 4th celebration.

Following on from the success of our **V-21 Vitamin Cookie**, the interns are headed back to the kitchen to create the BEST Gluten Free Cookie on the market - **the G-21 cookie** - Stay tuned. This is what Hugs+Mugs mentor Christine enjoys most about working in the bakery, *"Our new friend Alex at the bakery is the greatest teacher. It is fun counting the cookies and packing them with my friends, Chris, Patrick and Nicole. We all worked as a team. We were all styling in our baker's coats and hats too."*

Hugs+Mugs is located adjacent to the **GiGi's Playhouse National Achievement Center** at 2350 West Higgins Road in Hoffman Estates. Business hours Tuesdays - Fridays 11am-7pm, Saturdays 9am-5pm, closed Sundays and Mondays. For more information please e-mail hugsandmugs@gigisplayhouse.org or call 847-278-8531.

GiGi's Playhouse, GiGi U, and Hugs+Mugs count on the generosity of donations to support our no-fee programming. Donations can be made online at www.gigisplayhouse.org or contact Jayne Drew at jdrew@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. Currently there are more than 100 inquiries for new Playhouses worldwide.*

Contact:

Jayne Drew, National Development Director for GiGi's Playhouse Inc.
267-261-4918 jdrew@gigisplayhouse.org

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