



**GiGi's
PLAYHOUSE**
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
Chicago

educate. inspire. achieve

Newsletter



President's Letter

Happy Down Syndrome Awareness Month!!



Wow, what a year it's been. If 2011 was all about gaining momentum, 2012 has been about turning that momentum into something BIG. This year has been filled with so many great memories: watching the Girl Scout volunteers learn about Down syndrome and acceptance, meeting families downtown early in the morning to promote the Chicagoland 5K on NBC TV, and my particular highlight: laughing along with the actors and crowd at our Teen Drama Class's performance of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." We truly embraced the mission of "educate. inspire. achieve!"

2012 has been a boon for our programs. We've doubled the number of students in our one-on-one literacy tutoring and saw huge success in our new group tutoring classes this summer to get kids ready for school. Our Fine Motor classes overflowed with students and volunteers focusing on handwriting skills. And our Open Play is now Spanish-language friendly, providing a welcoming place for parents new and old to connect, share and relax.

We're not slowing down! This fall saw the launch of two new programs: Our Wednesday Winners adult program, offering social opportunities (such as regular game nights), as well as teaching vocational and life skills. We're also piloting a one-on-one Math Tutoring program, which – like our Literacy tutoring – was created by educators and geared specifically toward the ways in which people with Down syndrome learn.

As always, we're proud to offer these programs free to our families because we want every person with Down syndrome to reach his or her full potential. But that does not mean these programs come without cost. We still pay for materials and overhead, as well as the space in which to provide them. As we strive to serve more families and expand programs, we will need even more resources.

This year, in recognition of Down Syndrome Awareness month, please consider making ongoing monthly contributions to GiGi's, through an automated credit card payment. A donation of \$10, \$25, \$50 or \$100 every month will give us a more predictable stream of income ensuring that we can continue our mission of education and awareness-raising for years to come.

Thank you so much for supporting GiGi's Playhouse Chicago this year. We couldn't do what we do without you!

In deepest gratitude,

Kim Hanna

President of the Board
GiGi's Playhouse Chicago





A New Parent's Perspective

by Jennifer Kurtovic

I was so excited the first day I planned to go to an Open Play at GiGi's Playhouse in Chicago. So excited, in fact, that I arrived an hour early and just walked around the neighborhood.

What I didn't realize at the time was that my excitement was actually a combination of nerves and anxiety. I was about to enter an entirely new world, one that I had never imagined before my son, Benjamin, was born. I was unsure what it would feel like walking into a place that was defined by my son's "disability."

But the very instant I walked through the door, all my fears and uncertainty vanished! I was immediately greeted with warm smiles and completely open hearts. I can't tell you how incredibly welcome I felt just seconds after Benjamin and I arrived. Everyone was so excited to meet a new "member of the club!"

I have told everyone I know about GiGi's and how thrilled I am to have met so many supportive friends. Our family will be relocating to Chicago very soon and I cannot wait to visit GiGi's again.



A Year of Donations

We have been blessed with donations from a wide range of places. Every gift, no matter how big or small is greatly appreciated, grants from the Northcenter Chamber of Commerce and the Carmax Foundation, and even donations from people inspired just by seeing our windows on Lincoln Avenue. No story, however, touched us more than Gina Crovetti, who spread the word about GiGi's Playhouse half a world away by running the Roma Marathon in support of GiGi's and one of our members, Annie Beazley. Here is the letter she sent for donations:

I first met little baby Annie Beazley when she was only four months old. It was love at first sight. I am certainly not the first to be touched by Annie's love, nor will I be the last. Here at the John Felice Rome Center, Annie is our official campus baby – always putting smiles on faces, no matter what language her admirers speak. Besides being a limitless ray of sunshine, Annie brings a positive awareness to Down syndrome to our community. We are educated daily by seeing life through her eyes and through the experiences of the Beazley family.

When Annie is in Chicago, she visits a wonderful place called GiGi's Playhouse, a Down syndrome Awareness Center located in Chicago and throughout the Chicagoland area. GiGi's envisions a world in which individuals with Down syndrome are fully embraced and exposed to programs that facilitate and strengthen social interactions between individuals and the community. Their array of activities range from interactive play and skills for those learning to walk, to literacy programs and dance classes.

On March 18, I will be running the Roma Marathon to raise funds for Down Syndrome and would like to focus on Annie's organization of choice. Colleen Beazley and I are collaborating efforts to make all proceeds go to GiGi's Playhouse. We are reaching out to the community and all those who would like to graciously offer their donations to help us build a positive awareness of Down Syndrome and support GiGi's.

Gina and the Beazley's efforts far surpassed anything we could have imagined, raising nearly \$3,500 for the Playhouse. We are truly blessed to have supporters like her working on our behalf. Thank You, Gina!

Finding Inspiration Through Literacy

By Nicole Taylor

My student, Jimmy Harrison, is one of the brightest little boys I know. When Jimmy and I started literacy tutoring at GiGi's Playhouse in September 2011, he came with the best smile and a LOVE for books. We began reading books together, learning letters, sounds, and he began excelling at the A-Z books.

What surprised Christi, Jimmy's mom, and I the most was his ability to learn sight words while reading stories together. I began picking out 2 books each week and introduced a new word in each book. By the end of the 45 minute session, Jimmy could read every word on the index card. Today, after 11 months of working together, Jimmy knows almost 200 sight words.

I could go on and on about Jimmy's incredible literacy abilities, but I also want to share what an impact Jimmy has had on my life. He has shown me his tremendous abilities and determination, never giving up along the way. I count down the days until I am finished with my school program and I will be in a classroom every day, teaching children. I am so thankful that Jimmy continues to show me the love and desire I have to teach.



What Your Monthly Donation Provides:

Because we provide our programs at no cost, we rely on the generous support of our donors to provide vital services to our families and to spread awareness about Down syndrome.

Regular monthly donations make a huge difference! Please consider giving a monthly gift in support of the Chicago Playhouse:

- A monthly gift of \$10 supports one student for a year in our Fine Motor Class
- A monthly gift of \$25 supports one student for an semester of our Drama Class
- A monthly gift of \$50 supports one student for a year in our one-on-one Literacy Tutoring
- A monthly gift of \$100 supports our entire Wednesday Winners adults group for a year

Monthly support gives us an income we can rely on. Only through generous contributions from people like you can we continue to serve Chicago families.



GiGi's Playhouse
1069 W. Golf Rd.
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

nonprofit organization

u.s. postage

paid

rockford, il

permit no. 745

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Save the Date

Anniversary Party
Sunday, Oct. 21 • 11 am–1 pm

Annual Giving Commitment

GiGi's Playhouse Chicago is a Down syndrome awareness center on Chicago's north side, offering educational opportunities to people with Down syndrome, as well as resources for their families and awareness programs for the general community. All of our programs are offered FREE, regardless of need.

Please consider making a one-time or ongoing monthly contribution to GiGi's Playhouse Chicago. Return this form and your contribution to:

GiGi's Playhouse Chicago
3948 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60613

Yes, I would like to make an ongoing monthly contribution of:
 \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100

Yes, I would like to make a one-time donation of _____
to GiGi's Playhouse Chicago.

Yes, I would like to make a contribution online at
www.gigisplayhouse.org/chicago

To be charged to my credit card.

Credit Card type: Visa MasterCard American Express

Name _____

Signature _____

Credit Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

3-digit security code _____

You can also scan this mobile bar
code with your smartphone to be
taken directly to the site.

