

Gigi's Playhouse
Down Syndrome Awareness Centers
www.gigisplayhouse.org

GIGI'S NEWS

Serving two locations

Loving a child with Down syndrome is contagious... Help us spread the love!!

Hoffman Estates
 1069 W Golf Rd • Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
 847-885-PLAY • www.gigisplayhouse.com

Plainfield
 10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D • Plainfield, IL 60585
 630-778-PLAY • www.gigisplayhousetoo.com

January 2007

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

As we sit back and reflect on the past year we have so much to be thankful for! We have grown in so many ways, and we have local families and families that come from across the country to thank for that! Every little mark you leave on the playhouse helps another family in its own special way. Thank you for sharing your families with all of ours! You really are making a difference.

We have finally figured out why it has been so hard to keep up with all of the happenings at the Playhouse. We are operational over 70 hours a week at the Hoffman Estates location alone!! No wonder we were having a hard time keeping up!! Some days would seem so overwhelming but then a new baby would come in, or a new child in the literacy program would read their first sentence, or we would get a call from one of our adults with DS that just light up our hearts when at the end of the message they said "God Bless you guys" (and you knew they meant it), or when a tearful mother of a school-aged child on her first visit to the Playhouse received the information she needed to help at school and she exclaims "you saved his life" to our education coordinator, or when a group of on-line parents meet from across the world at GiGi's Playhouse Hoffman Estates (one family came in from Australia) and said "I wish I could properly convey to you the range of emotions I experienced as I walked into GiGi'sI can't, I swear, my eyes are beginning to tear as I think of it." The total acceptance and celebration of DS blew them away. This is only the beginning of the many rewards we receive everyday and what makes our mission (as tiring as it may be sometimes!) worth every second.

Just last week a woman showed up for open play, she was a little early and as she reached in the car to get the car seat, I knew she had to be a new mother by the look on her face. That look of fear and uncertainty (a look we all remember quite well!). She was, of course, greeted with a hug and congratulations. Little Pauly was only three weeks old (and only one week of confirmed diagnosis) and here was this mother coming out to learn about her new life with Down syndrome. The fear and anxiety began to fade from her face as she saw all of the pictures of kids and families enjoying their life. Then when she saw all the families come to open play she was blown away by how great all the kids were doing! Some of them gave her hugs but others were just too busy and they went on their way to play, just like other kids! She stayed for four hours (as most new parents do) and left content and smiling. She was back the next week with cookies! The look of fear and anxiety was replaced with a look of confidence. She had embraced the Down syndrome diagnosis and knew Pauly was going to be okay too.



Pauly and his mom with all of their new friends!



Pauly slept through most of his visit!

Teens looking to make a difference with other teens!!

A group of local high school and college students would like to party with you at the Playhouse! In January, we are piloting a program called "OPEN MIKE NIGHT" at the Hoffman Estates location for high school aged kids! We will have equal number of peers with Down syndrome as without. This will be a great way to meet new friends and make lasting friendships! Karaoke, jokes, whatever your talent is.... let it shine!! The first hour is open mike, then we start dancing!!!! Let off some steam and gain some self-esteem!! Be ready to party!!!

Friday January 12th from 7-9 p.m. OPEN MIKE NIGHT!

Please RSVP so we have enough snack and props

If we have a good turn out we will offer this program monthly.

Has it been a year already??

Annabelle Sheppard celebrated her first birthday with all of her family and friends at the Hoffman Estates Playhouse. Hard to believe just a few short months ago it was her and her mom sitting on the Playhouse couch for hours at their first visit! GiGi's Playhouse is your Playhouse too! Call to reserve it for your special party!



OUR MISSION: to increase awareness of Down syndrome by providing programming, support, and education.

HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

Every third Saturday of the month the Walkers group meets from 9 to 9:45 a.m. and Leaps and Bounds (Playhouse Performers dance class) meets from 10 to 11 a.m.

WALKERS!!!

Robin Wyzinski is a licensed Physical Therapist, and she will facilitate this new activity. Robin will run this structured gross motor group focusing on post-walking skills, peer activities, music and, of course, a whole bunch of fun! Children need to be walking independently and must be accompanied by a parent.

Only a couple of spaces left!! You must sign up for this class and sign a waiver before you can participate.



Leaps and Bounds even had the Daddy's workin' it! Come join us!!!

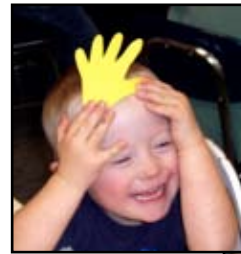
OPEN BIRTHDAY PARTY!

Saturday, January 6, 10-12
Is your birthday in the winter?? Come celebrate with us! Cake, goody bags, presents, bring the whole family! Friends too!! Please RSVP so we have enough for everyone!

Every second Saturday of the month features our 2-and-under group from 10 to 11:30 a.m. and our Hop, Skip and Jumpers (3-6 year old group) from 12 to 1:30 p.m.



The 2-and-under group had some new faces and new friendships and a little relaxin' too!!



The siblings always have a great time at the Playhouse! A great opportunity to make new friends and connect with other kids that have a sibling with Down syndrome.

The Hop, Skip and Jumpers did crafts, sang, played ball, and had a ball!!

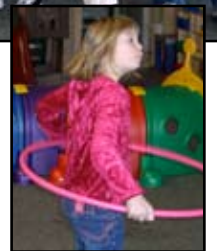


FRIDAY FRIENDS (18 and up) It's time for popcorn and a movie!!

Friday January 26th from 7 to 9 p.m. See you there!

The Polish group

had a great time at their pizza party! Join them the 4th Saturday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.



















Don't forget open mike night starts Friday, January 12th for High School kids!!!

Help us keep the Hoffman Playhouse growing!! Come join our AWESOME team! Call Bridget at 847-885-PLAY for more information!

HOFFMAN ESTATES LOCATION

January 2007



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Literacy Program 10:30 - 5:30	2 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30	3 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00	4 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! 	5 Reserved 2-4	6 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 Birthday Party 10-12
7	8 Literacy Program 10:30 - 5:30 	9 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30 	10 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 	11 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! 	12 Reserved 2-4 Open Mike Night 7:00	13 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 2 & Under Group 10:00 - 11:30 HOP, SKIP & JUMPERS 12:00 - 1:30 
14 Hispanic Play Group 11am-1pm	15 Literacy Program 10:30 - 5:30 	16 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30 	17 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 	18 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! 	19 Reserved 2-4	20 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 Walkers Group 9am-9:45am <i>RSVP required</i> Leaps & Bounds 10:00 - 11:00
21	22 Literacy Program 10:30 - 5:30 	23 Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30 	24 Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00 	25 Open Play 12:30 - 2:00 Everyone welcome! 	26 Reserved 2-4 Friday Friends movie & popcorn night 7pm	27 Literacy Program 8:00 - 10:00 UPS for Downs Playgroup 11am-1pm
28 Polish Play Group 11am-1pm	29	30  Literacy Program 9:00 - 12:00 3:30 - 6:30	31  Literacy Program 10:00 - 2:00			

Open Play-Every Thursday! Everyone is welcome! Stop by for pizza, pop and fun! We have volunteers to assist with the kids so the parents can hang out! It is awesome!!!!

The literacy program- GiGi's Playhouse provides FREE private tutoring to children with Down syndrome. Customized materials are provided for each individual student. The program also assists teachers and parents on how to tutor their children.

"Future" Friday Friends- Ages 6-8 only. Kids create lasting friendships through facilitated interactive play, while promoting good social skills. Each session ends with a pizza dinner in which social skills and table manners will be encouraged.

Friday Friends- Ages 18 and up only. Party with the gang! Equal numbers of peers with Down syndrome as without. Karaoke, dances, laser tag, bowling, prom, movie nights, friends and fun!

2 and under group- Families with kids 2 and under get together to play, and have fun while the parents network with each other!

Hop, Skip and Jumpers- For 3-5 year olds, this program will help promote friendships, good social skills and interactive play through fun creative activities!

Hispanic Group- Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education.

Polish Play Group- Polish speaking families gather for an afternoon of fun and friendship.

Reserved- Playhouse may be reserved for private play groups, parties or support groups

The Playhouse can be reserved for any Down syndrome related event.
When it is available it may also be used by other groups with special needs.

Everyone is welcome at GiGi's Playhouse!

Due to the need for scheduling volunteers and acquiring supplies, reservations are greatly appreciated.
(847) 885-PLAY, or you can e-mail nancy@gigisplayhouse.org. Feel free to leave a message!

Check the website for constant updates and to see pictures of the activities
www.gigisplayhouse.org!

GiGi's Playhouse is located 3 miles West of Woodfield Shopping Mall next to Schaumburg Toyota in the Brandess Center at
1069 W. Golf Road
Hoffman Estates IL, 60169
847-885-PLAY!

PLAINFIELD LOCATION



Calling all crawlers and walkers...

We are excited to announce the addition of two more crawlers and walkers groups. We have had such a great response to our crawlers and walkers groups that we are in need of adding two more. We will be adding a pre-crawlers and a pre-walkers group (see description below). The walkers will meet on the 2nd Saturday of the month with the pre-walkers at 9 am and the walkers at 10 am. The crawlers will meet on the 4th Saturday of the month with the pre-crawlers at 9 am and the crawlers at 10 am. Our new schedule starts in January 2007. If you have any questions please call Wendy Eurich at 630-423-4035.

Pre-crawlers - Children just learning to crawl.

Crawlers - Children who are crawling on hands and knees.

Pre-walkers - Children beginning to walk unassisted.

Walkers - Children consistently walking unassisted for several months.

Scrip Is Coming To Plainfield in 2007

You might ask, what is scrip? Scrip is purchasing negotiable gift certificates that can be used just like cash. Scrip is issued by national and local retailers where many of you already shop. GiGi's Plainfield is able to purchase the gift certificates at a discount off the face value and then sell them at full face value. The difference goes directly to GiGi's in Plainfield. Because Gigi's will pay for the gift certificates up-front, retailers are glad to discount anywhere from 2%-15%. Scrip can be used to purchase anything from groceries, fuel, clothing, toys, and cosmetics to entertainment, electronics, home improvement, or household services. By converting your buying dollars to scrip and shopping like you always do, you can help GiGi's maintain the building, run and fund the programs, and continue to grow! Stay tuned for further details.

We are looking for a few adult volunteers to help with our teen tastic and pre-teen groups at the playhouse. The teen tastic group meets once a month and they eat pizza, play games and have a great time socializing. We also need several volunteers to get the pre-teen group running again. This group is for pre-teens who are in 3rd-5th grade. Please call the playhouse at 630-778-7529 or Wendy Eurich at 630-423-4035.

Winter Fest

JANUARY 14, 2006
5-7 PM



Do you need to get out of the house? Come hang out with us. We will have snacks, drinks and loads of fun! RSVP to the playhouse 630-778-PLAY.

Come Sign With Us!



Are you interested in learning sign language?

Then we have a new group that you may be interested in attending. We have two young ladies going to school for sign language interpretation, and they want to share their knowledge with you. They will teach different signs that you can use in your daily communications with your child. Feel free to come with or without your children, and bring other family members as well. All ages are welcome. There will be handouts for you to take home and practice with your children. The group will meet the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month from 6-7 p.m. at the playhouse. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Wendy Eurich at 630-423-4035 or Amanda Ponton at 815-693-8148. We look forward to seeing you at our next group!

We need your pictures!



We are updating the pictures at the playhouse and need your help! Please send in a new photo of your child so we can hang them in our lobby. They need to be 8x10 (we will supply the frames). Please put your child's name and the date on the back of the picture and mail or bring in to the playhouse at your convenience.

PLAINFIELD LOCATION

January 2007



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
All Events are Free unless noted. *RSVP to 630-778-PLAY Bring a friend who doesn't have Down syndrome	1	2	3	4	5 Private Play Group 12-2 pm Teen-Tastic 7-9 pm	6  2 & Under 9:30-11:00 am 3-4 Playgroup 11:00 am-12:30 pm
7	8  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	9  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	10	11 Come Sign with Us 6-7 pm	12 Private Play Group 12-2 pm	13 Daddy & Me 3-4:30pm Pre-walkers 9-10 am Walkers 10-11am
14 Winer Fest 5-7 pm	15  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	16  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	17	18	19 Private Play Group 12-2 pm Signing Time 4:30-5:30 pm	20
21	22  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	23  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	24	25 Come Sign with Us 6-7 pm	26 Private Play Group 12-2 pm	27 Pre-crawlers 9-10 am Crawlers 10-11 am <i>RSVP to 630-423-4035</i>
28  Hispanic Group 11 am-1 pm	29  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	30  Literacy Program 3-6 pm <i>By appointment</i>	31	**Literacy Program is a FREE Literacy Program for all ages (by appointment only, please call Melisa at 630-904-6960 or email cleary@wowway.com) <i>We are looking for tutors and students.</i>		

2 & under playgroup: Families with children 2 and under get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

3-4 year old playgroup: Families with children ages 3-4 get together and play while the parents network with each other. Siblings always welcome.

GiGi's Crawlers: This group focus' on crawling skills as well as fine motor skills, social interaction with peers in a semi-structured environment. Children need to be crawling and are accompanied by a parent/adult.

GiGi's Walkers: This group's focus is on post walking skills with peers to prepare children for school activities (balance beam, kicking, throwing, jumping, etc.) Children need to be walking and must be accompanied by a parent/adult.

Teen Tastic: This group usually meets the 4th Fri. of the month from 7-9pm. We order pizza for dinner and have lots of fun watching movies and playing games with each other. 6th-12th grades.

Hispanic Group: Spanish speaking families gather for food, fun, friendship and education.

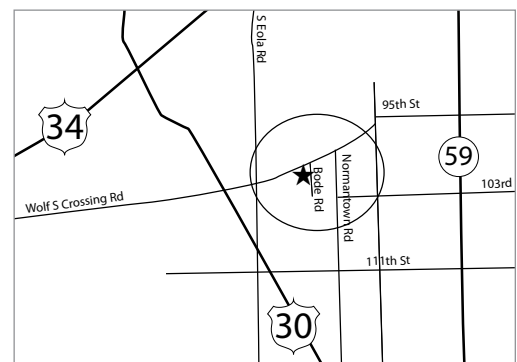
Intro to Sign Language: Come with your child to learn Sign Language. All ages are welcome.

Signing Time Group: Learn sign language by signing along to the songs from the TV series. All ages are welcome.

Daddy and Me: Dads get out with the kids and get together with other dads. All ages.

Birthday Party: All ages

10052 S. Bode Rd, Unit D
Plainfield, IL 60585
630-778-PLAY (7529) • fax (630) 778-7519
www.gigisplayhousetoo.com



Jim Snower

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all of the friends and family of Jim Snower. When he passed away last month, his family requested donations to the Playhouse in lieu of flowers. Jim had wanted donations to go somewhere to specifically benefit Down syndrome and, therefore, benefit his niece, Alexis.

Here is a story from Alexis's mother:

"GiGi's Playhouse is such a neat place - I wish we could open one up more local to my house, to tell you the truth. This is somewhere Lexi will definitely enjoy going to for a long time!



Briefly, Lexi was born with a complete AV canal (I'm sure you're familiar with that term). At the age of 4 months, she had a surgery to repair it, and while recovering her heart unfortunately began to fail. She needed the surgery repeated. We knew that was VERY risky to go back for the second surgery, and that there was a really good chance we were going to lose her. Our family came to support us and to see her. We walked everybody back, one by one, to say their prayers for her and get a few minutes of time. And when Uncle Jim came back to see her with me, he knew exactly what to say...and was the only one who cried for her in front of me. I still think about how much that meant - to see him grieving for the life that she might not get to have.

Just like Aunt Terry, he always treated me more like a daughter than a niece. And that day I saw that he loved my children like they were his own grandchildren. I hope for my children that they will all live as full and wonderful a life as he did.

It will take a long time to grieve and heal, but I like knowing that every time I set foot in GiGi's Playhouse, there will be a reminder of Uncle Jim."

The donations are still coming in to this day! He sounds like an amazing man. I only wish we at the Playhouse had the honor of meeting him. Thank you.



Helping to make a difference

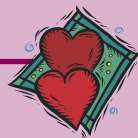
Thank you to the Assurance Insurance Company!!

The Assurance Agency of Schaumburg sent over members from their ACT (Assurance Caring Together) program to help the literacy program AGAIN!!!!

We cannot thank them enough for paying their employees to come to the Playhouse for an entire day and work for us!! As you know, our literacy program has over 120 kids in it! Having help in creating the teaching tools is critical! We could not have done it without you!!

Not only did they donate volunteers they also donated \$3,500! A portion of that money went towards new book bags for all of the kids in the literacy program!! Check them out!!

Thank you Assurance!



*Celebrate Your
Valentine's Weekend*

at our 1st Annual

Spread the Love Gala

Saturday, February 10, 2007
Belvedere Events & Banquets
1170 W. Devon Ave
Elk Grove Village, IL

Black Tie Optional

Tickets go on sale January 5, 2007
Space is limited. First Come, First Serve.
Tickets \$100 per person
V.I.P. Seating Available

Credit Card Accepted
Call the Playhouse for Tickets

If your company is interested in advertising in the Gala's inspirational program book or sponsorship opportunities contact Roberta or Bridget at the playhouse 847-885-PLAY.

We would like to acknowledge a very special group of students at Haines Middle School in St. Charles. The students used their P.E. period to participate in a Walk-a-thon to raise money for NDSS and GiGi's Playhouse! Their efforts were intended to honor one of their fellow students who has Down syndrome, as well as Nolan Finn, a GiGi's regular (not to mention a GiGi's Playhouse Calendar boy), whose dad, Sean, is an 8th grade teacher at Haines. They presented GiGi's with a check for \$1,600, for which we are so grateful! *Way to increase awareness, Haines Middle School!*



2007 Down Syndrome Awareness Calendar



We are almost out of the 2007 Down syndrome Awareness Calendar "BELIEVE" and if you have seen them you know why!! The 2007 "BELIEVE" calendar has a powerful message that everyone can learn from and it is absolutely beautiful!! Please don't just give it, but hang up your calendar, too! Read it from beginning to end and encourage others to read it, as well. Hopefully, they will read it to themselves, their children, and all who receive the calendar as a gift. The message is clear and wonderful.

As we enter this holiday season, please reach out to people and encourage them to "BELIEVE" in children with Down syndrome by giving them a calendar as a gift. Please remember every calendar you display or give as a gift helps further awareness and education of Down syndrome.



Remember!! 100% of the profits from this calendar go right back into Down syndrome awareness!!



1069 W Golf Rd
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

HOLIDAY RAFFLE TICKETS ON SALE NOW!!



1st prize \$10,000 CASH!!

**2nd Prize 1 week paradise vacation to
Kauai Hawaii!! (including airfare, valued at
\$6,500)**

**3rd Prize Dazzling Vintage rubalite
diamond necklace with matching earring
designed by Simon G!! (\$4,000)**

*A huge Thank you to Chuck Helfrick and Rahl Jewelers in
Hoffman Estates for believing in us and the incredible
potential of all of our children with Down syndrome!!!
www.rahljewelers.com*

**The tickets are \$100.00 and only 1000 will be sold!! If you
can not buy a ticket yourself, ask family or co-workers. I
am sure they would be happy to win any of the awesome
prizes and support a great cause...OUR KIDS!**

Literacy Program

Thanks to our AWESOME volunteers GiGi's Playhouse FREE "Learn to Read" Literacy Program is now helping over 150 individuals with Down syndrome learn to read! Here is what one of our volunteer said about her experience with the program:
"Volunteering at GiGi's Playhouse has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life. Every week I see amazing progress. Helping the teachers with the literacy program has allowed me to experience the joy of watching the children develop reading and signing skills. They are always so proud when they learn new words. Thanks to GiGi's Playhouse and all of the incredible families I have met, I now know what great potential these little ones have and how blessed we are if they come into our lives. GiGi's Playhouse and everyone affiliated with it will always have a special place in my heart. God has given me a very special blessing in allowing me to be a part of the wonderful things being done here. "
Thanks Barb!
We love you too!

