

Did You Know?

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month!

We've all been there before — we walk into a room, and for whatever reason, it feels like all eyes are on us. For most of us, this is a fleeting feeling, but for individuals with Down syndrome, this is a daily reality. Individuals with Down syndrome wear their diagnosis on their face. Because of this, individuals with Down syndrome are often met with a mixed reception when they enter public spaces: awkward glances, long stares, or even being pointed at and laughed at.

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, and at GiGi's Playhouse, we're shining a light on the challenges that members of the Down syndrome community still face. These challenges are universal, but for members of the Down syndrome community, they're intensified. Loneliness is a perfect example. It's a problem we all face. Despite being more connected than ever, people are more isolated and depressed. While loneliness is a widespread problem, it's intensified for individuals with disabilities — a WHOPPING 61 percent of people with disabilities report that they're chronically lonely!

Since their diagnosis is easily visible, individuals with Down syndrome bear the brunt of this social isolation. It's a problem. But like all problems, there's a solution: Inclusion Through Action.

That's why Down Syndrome Awareness Month is so vital. At GiGi's, we believe awareness is the first step in creating a more accepting world. The world cannot accept the Down syndrome community until everyone is aware of the challenges they face. But while awareness is extremely important, it by itself is not enough to create acceptance. Beyond cursory knowledge, people need meaningful exposure to individuals with Down syndrome. Exposure leads to understanding. It's only through genuine understanding that we can create a more inclusive and accepting world.

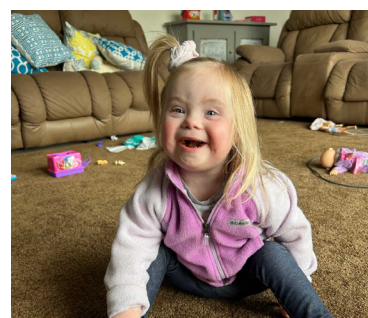
GiGi's Playhouse provides that exposure. In addition to FREE programming, our network of 60+ Playhouses gives entire communities the opportunity to gain meaningful exposure to individuals with Down syndrome. Because so many members of society are not used to seeing individuals with Down

syndrome, they often feel awkward when they encounter people with Down syndrome in public and don't know how to interact. This separation creates a barrier that causes individuals with Down syndrome to feel isolated from the rest of the world.

But GiGi's Playhouse is changing this! Through awareness and exposure, we can facilitate understanding and ultimately create a more accepting world! Down Syndrome Awareness Month is the first building block in dismantling this barrier, undoing the divide, and uniting individuals with Down syndrome with the rest of the world!

This Down Syndrome Awareness Month, we're challenging everyone to go beyond merely spreading awareness.

In addition to amplifying Down syndrome, GiGi's Playhouse is asking everyone to challenge themselves to increase exposure, facilitate understanding, and ultimately help us spread acceptance for the entire Down syndrome community!



Why We Need You!

GiGi's Playhouse is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and is solely funded by private donations, foundational grants, and peer-to-peer fundraising.

GiGi's Playhouse is 99% volunteer-run, meaning volunteers are the foundation of every GiGi's location.

By giving away our services 100% FREE of charge, we rely on volunteers to help provide our life-changing programs.

Donate Today

Make a donation to change the life of an individual or family.

Fundraise

Start a fundraiser or support an existing fundraising campaign.

Volunteer

Give your time to help us change the way the world sees Down syndrome.

What is Down Syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition where an individual has 3 number 21 chromosomes. This extra genetic material changes how their bodies grow and learn.

A Down Syndrome Diagnosis Includes

Hypotonia (Low Muscle Tone)

Impacts speech, digestion, fitness, fine and gross motor skills and more. Every person with Down syndrome has low muscle tone. If you do not have strong core muscles you cannot sit up straight. If you cannot sit up straight you cannot take proper breaths. If you cannot take proper breaths: you cannot speak or read properly.

How GiGi's Helps - Hypotonia

Therapeutic and fitness-based programs for all ages. Tackles low muscle tone, hypotonia. Advances gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and speech and language development.

Cognitive Delays

Delays in speaking and processing verbal information. This means a child or adult may struggle with language even though she/he understands what is communicated.

How GiGi's Helps - Cognitive Delays

1-on-1 math and literacy tutoring. Addresses cognitive impairment Curriculum and materials customized to the unique learning styles of individuals with Down syndrome.

Limited Opportunities

Insufficient participation in extracurricular activities, employment, volunteerism and community engagement can result in depression, isolation, and ignorance from others.

How GiGi's Helps - Limited Opportunities

Innovative programs for adults focusing on self-confidence, fitness, nutrition and career skills. Addresses the need for improved adult opportunities career training center in a live retail café and through corporate partnerships

Limited Acceptance

People with Down syndrome wear their diagnosis on their faces, and are often subjected to bullying, prejudice and cruelty. Wearing a Down syndrome diagnosis on their face, combined with the despicable prevalence of the "R-word" on social media, in sports and entertainment, and more: empirical differences can challenge emotional wellness and fundamental ACCEPTANCE every single day.

How GiGi's Helps- Limited Acceptance

Generation G: a movement, daily mindset and national campaign to build global acceptance and lasting social change. Generation G is a conscious decision to be better every day. Be Accepting. Be Generous. Be Kind. Changing the world is in the palm of your hand. #GenerationG is a worldwide movement that goes beyond Down syndrome and sends a global message of acceptance for ALL!



GiGiFIT

Acceptance Challenge

The GiGiFIT Acceptance Challenge is both an in-person and virtual event taking place across the country! From March 21st – June 25th GiGi's Playhouse locations will be hosting their own GiGiFIT Acceptance Challenges consisting of fitness-based challenges and fun-filled activities fit for the whole family. Everyone can also support our Virtual Playhouse through their Virtual Movement Challenge.

The challenge is simple, support our Virtual Playhouse or join one of the 55+ GFAC events across the country and take part in the festivities to show your commitment to the inclusion of those with Down syndrome and all unique abilities! Raise awareness and funds by signing up and inviting your peers to join your team! The funds and awareness you raise will go to help provide life-changing programs and acceptance initiatives at GiGi's Playhouse.



GiGi's Career Training Programs



GiGi University

GiGi U is designed for motivated adults with Down syndrome to achieve their highest potential in the real world while developing their abilities in the areas of wellness, communication and career skills with emphasis on job interviewing, communication skills, money management, public speaking, customer service, computer skills, team building and health. Recommended for Adults 18+.

GiGi Prep

The GiGi Prep program has an emphasis on building communication skills, money management, customer service skills, team building, health and wellness over a 10-week session made up of 2-days per week instructional learning. This program is an application-based program with high expectations to motivate adults with Down syndrome. Recommended for Adults 18+.

GiGi Professional

GiGi's career internship programs build on the skills learned in GiGi U with practical applications and the achievement of certifications. During each individual with Down syndromes 13-week internship they will purposefully progress through certifications learning and demonstrating strengths and interests in transferable job skills, building their resume for placement in a job or volunteer position in the community. Pre-req: GiGi U.

Programs For All Ages

Destination Discovery

Supports the development of fine motor skills, gross motor skills, social skills and language through purposeful play and peer to peer interaction in a casual and fun setting. This program also brings families together to share experiences and build relationships. All ages welcome.

GiGi's Amina Grace One-on-One Speech & Language Program

Provides youth, teens and adults with greatly expanded opportunities to evolve and refine their speech and language skills in a 1-on-1 setting. Effective enunciation, clarity of speech, word order and message meaning are paramount to fostering greater self-confidence, comprehension, problem-solving, school readiness, social skills, independence, and overall quality of life. Recommended for All Ages.

One-on-One Literacy

The Literacy tutoring program supports the increase of sight word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, articulation, self-esteem, speech clarity and fine motor skills. Our trained tutors provide motivating and purposeful lessons designed to keep our students engaged and learning both during sessions and when extending activities at home. Recommended for ages 3+.

One-on-One Math

The Math tutoring program supports the increase of the range of math skills, self-esteem, confidence, critical thinking, problem solving skills, independence and autonomy, and fine motor skills. Our research-based curriculum encompasses a variety of strategies and techniques to ensure that every student can be successful when learning math. Recommended for ages 3+.

Goals for Each GiGi's Playhouse Program

Create opportunities for parent networking and provide educational tools

Instill high expectations for each participant to follow program routines and to fully participate in planned activities

Motivate the child, parent and volunteers to give their "Best of All" in each program session

Deliver purposeful programming tailored for individuals with Down syndrome, to include structured routines, purposeful activity planning and an (engaging/fun/creative) environment to foster development and encourage growth in individuals with Down syndrome

Provide specific, therapeutic or educational learning opportunities to support development of speech, language, social, and motor skills tailored to addressing the universal challenges of individuals with Down syndrome

Remove the barrier of cost for our participants by offering free programs



Want to Learn more about GiGi's Playhouse?
Visit Us Online at www.gigisplayhouse.org