

# 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Gilbis  
PLAYHOUSE<sup>TM</sup>

Down Syndrome Achievement Centers  
NYC



educate. inspire. believe.

# WELCOME



Girls' Playhouse  
Dance, Speech, Movement, Circus  
NYC





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# LETTER

Debbie Morris | *Board President*



My daughter Sophia, born with Down syndrome, was five years old when I began to think ahead to her teenage years. I knew that I wanted her to know her community and to develop life-long friendships like any other child. A Google search brought me to the homepage of GiGi's Playhouse, a Chicago-based organization, and I knew then that I had found a place for Sophia to make the friends I so wanted for her (and where she could learn and have fun, too!). But first I had to figure out how to open a GiGi's Playhouse in NYC!

It's five years later and our Playhouse has now been open for three years. It's been an exciting journey and each year has been defined by its own set of accomplishments. 2014 was a watershed year for us: we secured an attractive lease for long-term space, added new Board members, expanded our programming and held our most successful fund-raising gala to date.

We accomplished all of this thanks to our dynamic Playhouse leadership, a committed Board of Directors, countless skilled and passionate volunteers, wonderful families in our community and the on-going financial support of generous individuals, corporations and foundations.

I sincerely thank all of our supporters, leaders, volunteers, friends and the Harlem community for embracing GiGi's Playhouse NYC. With your continued support, we will serve an ever-increasing number of families and people with Down syndrome with programs, lectures, social gatherings and lifelong friendships. I can't wait to see what's in store for Sophia and her friends!

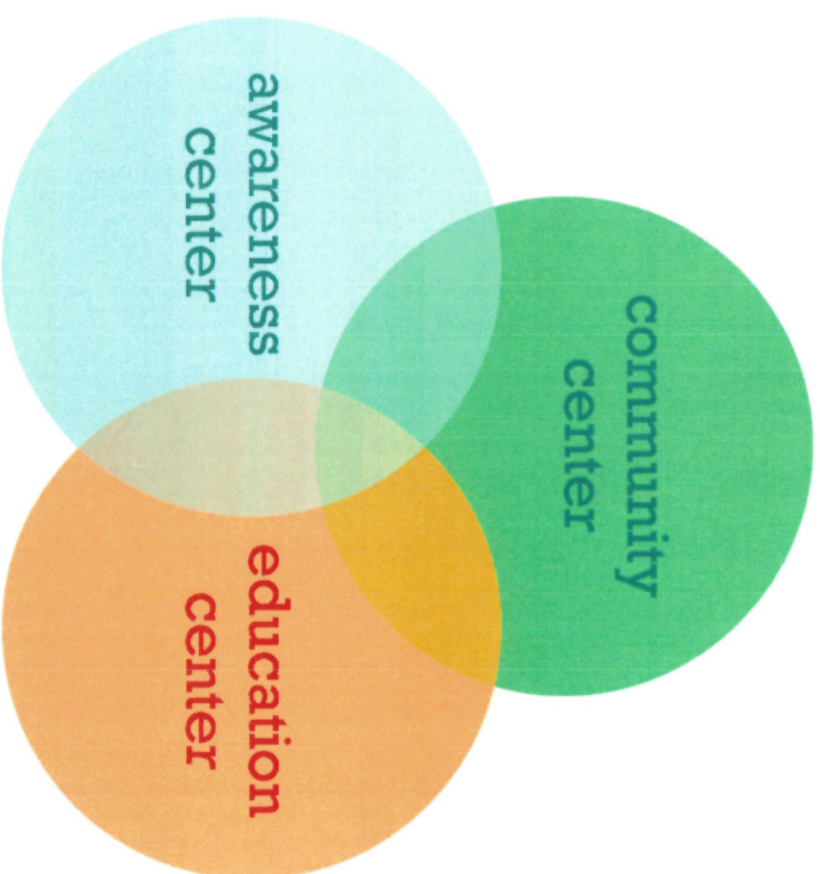
Warm regards,

# MISSION & VISION

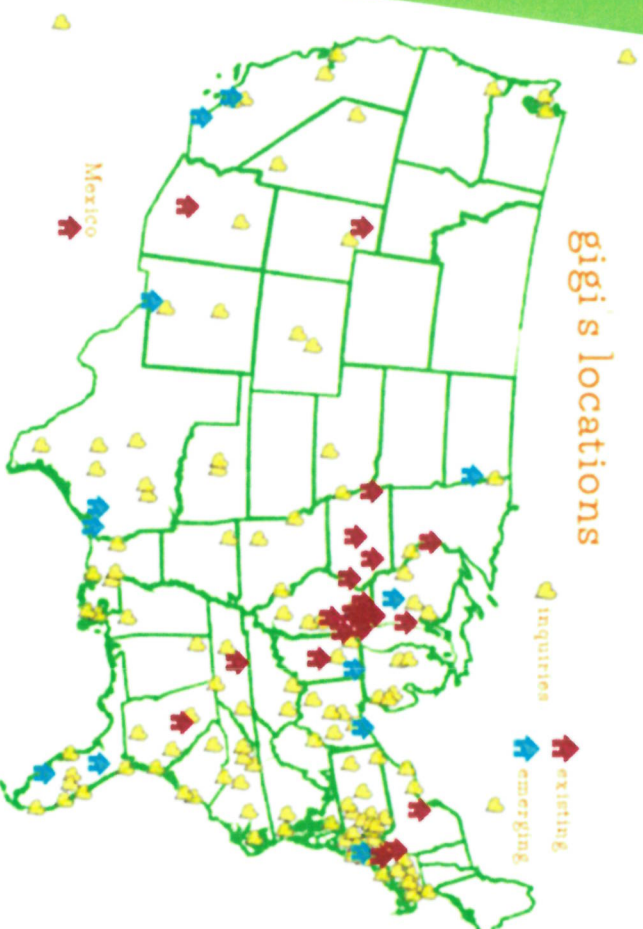
**OUR MISSION:** is to increase **positive awareness** of Down syndrome through **national campaigns, educational programs** and by **empowering individuals with Down syndrome**, their families and the community.

.....

**OUR VISION:** is to see a world where individuals with Down syndrome are **accepted** and **embraced** in their families, schools and communities.



# NATIONAL NETWORK



Changing the way the world sees Down syndrome.  
one child. one diagnosis. one community at a time.

The President and Founder of **Gigi's Playhouse** is Nancy Gianni. When Nancy gave birth to her daughter, Gigi, eleven years ago, she was inspired to create a place where children with Down syndrome and their families could come together free of charge for education, awareness and fun. Through Nancy's passion and commitment, there are now more than twenty Gigi's Playhouses across the country, with plans for many more. **Gigi's Playhouse** empowers individuals with Down syndrome to reach their greatest potential. From Nancy's inspiring vision, **Gigi's Playhouse NYC** opened its doors in 2012, thanks to the resources and hard work of our intrepid founders, Tracy Nixon and Debbie Morris and our Executive Director, Britt Sady. As the only **Gigi's Playhouse** in New York City, we have an important mission and a large community to serve. **Gigi's Playhouse, Inc.** and its subsidiaries, including **Gigi's Playhouse NYC**, carry a 501(c)(3) exemption.

# OUR PROGRAMS

## PROGRAMS FOR EARLY LEARNERS

### hop, skip & jump | ages 2-7

Join this weekly educational dance party. Your child will have their moment in the spotlight, dance and learn a few letters along the way as everyone wiggles and jiggles to some of the hippest songs that kid's parents love.

### sign language/music | ages 0-7

Children and parents gather in a circle to expand vocabulary comprehension and expression with sign language as the training wheels to speech. Drop-in program, friends and family welcome.

## PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS & ADULTS

### gratitude committee | ages 20 and up

This core group of adult volunteers with Down syndrome meets weekly to hand-craft thank you cards for our amazing volunteer staff and other Playhouse projects. Please call the Playhouse if you'd like to join this group and contribute your artistic flare.

### friday friends | ages 18 and up

Friday Friends is social club for adults with Down syndrome: a fun night out to facilitate social interactions between adults with Down syndrome, their peers and the community. The program provides a social outlet for participants to meet new friends, learn new skills and most of all, for this group to adults to have loads of fun.

## PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

### adaptive ballet | ages 2 and up

Discover your inner ballerina while learning classical ballet steps and positions! Develop Ballet fundamentals: balance, coordination, and rhythm. Dancers develop strength and elegance while appreciating this classical art form. Ballet improves posture, body awareness, builds confidence, and grace. Drop-in program.

### literacy pods | ages 3-8

Children learn to love literacy in this weekly small-group setting.

### playhouse pals | ages 9-15

This social club uses theater games to teach social skills and builds intimate friendships for our t'weens. Parents get the opportunity to meet separately, on site for an adult social hour.

### storytelling | all ages

Come exercise your imagination through crafts, music, dance, and acting! Each session will center on a different theme, and will explore interactive storytelling.

### soccer practice | all ages

Practice soccer skills, build strength and agility, and spend time with friends.

### karate | all ages

Adaptive Karate with instructors such as David Sheeger, of Shihan Martial Arts. Whatever your current level of fitness or experience with martial arts, karate training will build strength, speed, flexibility and stamina. Siblings welcome.



“ Our programs not only educate individuals with Down syndrome and their families, but also provide support through a nurturing community ”

# OUR LECTURES & EVENTS

## National “I Have a Voice” Gala | Annually

Every chapter of GiGi’s Playhouse International holds their biggest fundraiser – the annual ‘I have a voice’ gala. Guests enjoy dinner, dancing, silent and live auctions, and knowing that their generosity supports free programs for individuals with Down syndrome and their loved ones! Generous friends new and old help us raise the funds we need to support our growing community center, and corporate friends gain a better understanding of the challenges we live with and the profound joy our children bring.

## World Down Syndrome Day Party | March

Dancing, crafts, food and fun! Our yearly celebration of World Down Syndrome Day brings together members of the New York City Down syndrome community for a day of pride and solidarity.

## Dancing for Down Syndrome | May

Our grass-roots awareness and fundraising initiative, Dancing for Down Syndrome, asks families to tell their story of loving someone with Down syndrome and being a part of the Playhouse community, and to share that story with the wider community. This event is by and for the families that come to the Playhouse and benefit from our free classes, workshops, lectures, parties and events. The campaign ends with a dance party celebration of everyone’s efforts! This was a first-time event in 2014 and repeats annually.

## Building Blocks for Success | November

We bring together experts for panel discussions on the building blocks for a happy, successful life for an individual with Down syndrome. These talks focus on what parents can do to give their child the greatest opportunities in their adult lives. Esteemed NYC experts volunteer to form the panels for these events.

## Winter Celebration | December

Games, crafts, snacks, music, dancing, mascots, photo booth, and special guests make this yearly holiday party a fun event for the whole family.

## Parent Support

### grupo de familias de habla española

Nuestras familias se juntan para conversar sobre temas de interés en común sobre el Síndrome de Down, para aprender y crecer juntos en este camino. GiGi’s busca educar en comunidad a los padres e hijos que buscan transformar su vida y la sociedad que rodea a quienes más quieren.

*Our families get together to talk about topics of interest to the Down syndrome community, to learn and grow together. GiGi’s seeks to educate and create a community of parents who want to transform their lives and the lives of their loved ones with Down syndrome.*

### under 2’s

Families enjoy support, friendship, mentorship and the advice of various experts in the field of special needs and infant care. Drop-in program, for new and expectant parents.

### pre-natal diagnosis support

GiGi’s offers accurate and positive information about Down syndrome to families who have just received a pre-natal diagnosis.

“**GiGi’s Playhouse NYC** hosts several events and lectures throughout the year that support our mission and the community we serve.”



# RESOURCES & SUPPORT

# NEW YORK POST

# GLAMOUR

# NYMetroParents

# LAURA INGRAHAM

# YAI family

New York

# Umind

Down Syndrome Cognition Research  
FOUNDATION

# HUFFPOST EDUCATION

# ndss.

national down syndrome society

# ifc

Invest for children  
una fundación de  
Invest industrial

“Gigi's Playhouse NYC partners with many organizations that support the Down syndrome community and help us spread our message of awareness.”



# CORE VOLUNTEER TEAM

Volunteers are the backbone of the Playhouse. We rely on the dedication, talent, and expertise of a core group of volunteers who deliver our programs. We ask for a three-month commitment; the majority of our core program volunteers have served for over 2 years.

*“It’s so nice to be at a place where everyone is so loving and friendly. Everyone here cares for each other and helps build new friendships. It’s an amazing experience.”*

-Lauren



”



*“After a year of volunteering, I continue to support Gigi’s Playhouse because it is a warm and welcoming place for me to learn responsibility and care for others. The people here are all incredible, and I wouldn’t change this experience for the world.”*

-Brandt



*“I’ve seen friendships grow and flourish, confidence blossom, and language skills multiply throughout this year or so here at the Playhouse.”*

-Lilli

*“Gigi’s Playhouse is a place of joy, empowerment, affirmation, and possibility. I came to Gigi’s to volunteer and I hope I can enrich the lives of all those who are lucky enough to have discovered the Playhouse!!!”*

-Andy



# BOARD, COMMITTEE & STAFF

## NYC BOARD MEMBERS

Deborah Morris, Board President  
Jane Providenti, Vice President & Governance Chair  
Sharon Hart-Fanelli, Board Secretary  
Rebecca Purnick, Board Treasurer & Finance Chair  
Tom J. Fogarty, Gala Chair  
Jon Connolly, Development Chair  
Lauren Fogarty  
Gretchen Hayes  
Gerald Sifert

## NYC STAFF

Britt Sady, Executive Director  
Nina Gonzalez, Office Manager

## PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jordana Mendelson  
Bonnie Keilty  
Kristen O'Brien  
Emily Perl Kingsley  
Megan Fucci  
Cary Williams  
Tobie Franklin  
Liza Galler  
Kathleen Feeley  
Jane Providenti  
Tracy Nixon  
Hilda Chusid

## GALA COMMITTEE

Tom J. Fogarty, Gala Chair  
Frank Sawyer  
Heather Trivedi  
Jerry Sifert  
JoAnn Fogarty  
Rebecca Purnick

## INTERNS & ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEERS

Julia Klele  
Heesun Kim  
D'Andra Brown  
Veronica Labarca

## PROGRAM LEADERS

Lili Rusing, Literacy Tutor/Hop Skip & Jump  
Kadijha Bagby, Literacy Tutor  
Brandt Hersh, Literacy Tutor, events support  
Gina Graves, Sign Language/Music Teacher  
Andy Kleiman, Hop Skip & Jump, Playhouse Pals  
David Sheeger, Karate Teacher  
Madeline Day, Ballet Teacher  
Lauren Costabile, Tap Teacher/Ballet Assistant  
Hayden Wilson, Soccer Coach

## PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

Anita Murtha  
Ada Zhou  
Noa Hankin  
Jack Robins  
Keshi Taryan-Kigel  
Victoria Hinojosa  
Denise Epstein  
Eunice Daudu

# LETTER

**Britt Sady | Executive Director**



Since opening our doors in February 2012, the Playhouse has worked tirelessly to build a community and learning center for Down syndrome in New York City. There was little sleep, but a profound sense of joy in making our dreams a reality.

I am so proud to report our many accomplishments in 2014:

- GiGi's Playhouse NYC served over 1,500 participants! The Playhouse community participated in weekly classes in ballet, literacy, karate, soccer, storytelling, art and social skills. We also hosted lectures, workshops and discussions for parents and care-givers given by our network of developmental and educational experts who volunteer their time and skills so generously.
- Because of our social-skills programs, we saw children with limited social abilities become confident and popular in a community they can now call their own.
- Through our literacy programs, we saw children learn to love reading while parents gained confidence that their children could learn this vital life skill.
- Thanks to our lectures and workshops, we saw parents make more informed choices about their children's social, medical and educational well-being.
- And our accomplishments are being noticed. Glamour Magazine asked us to pay tribute to their Woman of the Year, Radio Disney did a feature program about the Playhouse, Heart-A-Cause made GiGi's their cause of the year during fashion week, and Sarah Lawrence College's Genetics Program made it mandatory for any genetics student to spend a day with us to learn what it is really like to have a child with Down syndrome.

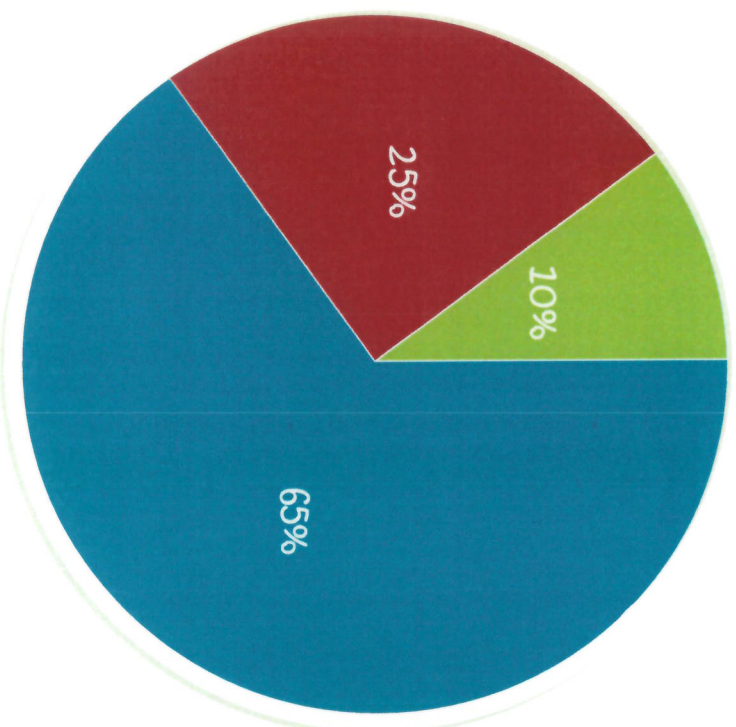
Statistics indicate that there are over 11,000 individuals with Down syndrome in the New York City area. That's a lot of lives to touch and a lot more work to do!

2015 promises to be the most exciting year yet for GiGi's Playhouse NYC. I am so proud to serve as the Executive Director of this wonderful organization. Please stop in for a visit!

Warmly,  


# FINANCIALS

2014 Total Expenses\*:  
\$241,000



- Programs
- Fundraising
- General & Administration

“ 90% of our annual expenditures go directly to programming and events that benefit our community and related fundraising. ”

\* Excerpted from our 2014 Form 990 and Audited Financial Statement.  
Available upon request.

## FOUNDER'S CIRCLE

Tracy Nixon	Gretchen Hayes
Tom & JoAnn Fogarty	Matthew & Lauren Fogarty
Andrew & Debbie Morris	Jean Sullivan & Richard Cane
Benno & Evelyn Ansbacher	Jonathan & Rosemary Ansbacher
Gaurang & Heather Trivedi	Mitch Rubin & Audra Zuckerman
Eric & Becky Fogarty	Invest for children

**\$20,000+**  
Invest for Children

**\$15,000+**  
Andrew & Debbie Morris  
Anonymous

**\$10,000+**  
Benno & Evelyn Ansbacher  
Jonathan & Rosemary Ansbacher  
Eric & Becky Fogarty  
Matthew & Lauren Fogarty  
Tracy Nixon

**\$5,000+**  
AIG  
Kevin & Sarah Brakstad  
Jean Sullivan & Richard Cane  
Tom & JoAnn Fogarty  
Oliver & Elissia Sigalow

**\$2,500+**

Michael Borello  
Jeremy Bressler  
Environmental Building Solutions, LLC  
Jack & Aggie Green  
Gretchen Hayes  
Guardian Services Industries, LLC  
David Mazullo  
Britt Sady  
Michelle Smith  
Dr. Heather Trivedi

**\$1,000+**  
Josh & Laura Blau  
Jennifer Patterson & Louis Craco II  
William Craco  
Robert D'lorenzo

**\$1,000+ continued**  
Chad & Emily Dreas  
Tim Driscoll  
Michael Estock  
Robert Maccarrone  
Jessy Nahmias  
NY Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Corp  
Marya Propis  
Steven & Laura Riggio  
Lisa Wegeman

**\$500+**  
Noreen Weiss Alder  
Joshua Arden  
Paul Ashton  
Wendy White Baxter  
Phoebe & Todd Boyer  
Ruth Brickson  
Cindy & Kenny Chau  
Columbia University  
Kirsten DeBear  
Linda Drummy  
Hakan Ergulec  
Mark & Maggie Gaines  
Susan Hayes  
Kids for Kids Foundation  
Marvel US Management, LLC  
Silvia Morisaki  
Anita Murtha  
Srinivasan Nangavaram  
Joseph Neto & Associates, Inc.  
Perry Patterson, Jr.  
Ramon & Imani Rosario  
Valerie Rossi  
Marilee & Richard Reilly  
Shafer & Adrienne Saldana  
Shula Samer  
M Alice de Tiberge

“We are grateful for our generous donors. **GiGi's Playhouse NYC** is entirely locally funded by Individual and corporate donations and foundation support.”

# CONTACT INFORMATION

**Location:**

106 W. 117th Street  
New York, NY 10026

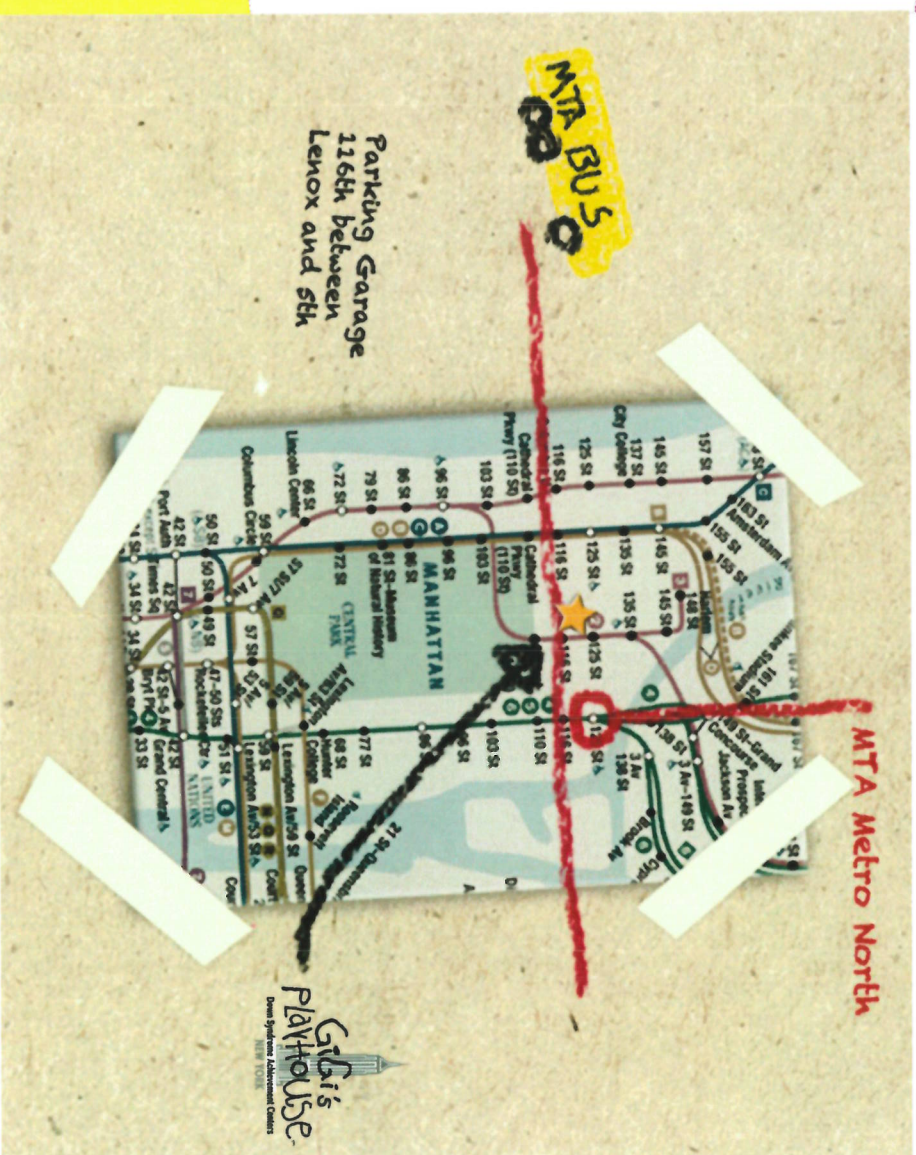
**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 925, New York, NY 10026

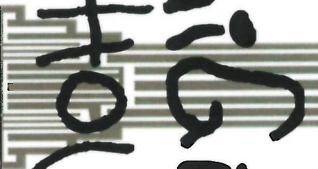
646-801-7529

[nyc@gigisplayhouse.org](mailto:nyc@gigisplayhouse.org)

[gigisplayhouse.org/newyork](http://gigisplayhouse.org/newyork)



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# Gabi's PLAYHOUSE™

Down Syndrome Achievement Centers  
NYC

educate. inspire. believe.

THANK YOU

