

## Gigi's Playhouse Madison Summary Report

### **Information about the Applicant**

The mission of GiGi's Playhouse is to change the way the world views Down syndrome and to send a global message of acceptance for all. Our vision is to create a community where individuals with Down syndrome have full inclusion and equal opportunity to succeed. We create equal opportunity for our students through consistent delivery of free educational, therapeutic-based programs for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community, offered in a brick-and-mortar playhouse located in Madison, Wisconsin. The organization was founded in 2003 in Hoffman Estates, Illinois and has expanded to 55 playhouses worldwide. The Madison GiGi's Playhouse opened in May of 2016 and has grown from serving 66 families in 2016, to over 300 families in 2022. In its six years of service, GiGi's has provided over 16,000 hours of education and therapeutic classes.

### **Statement of Need**

GiGi's Playhouse-Madison serves a population often excluded and misunderstood, even in progressive Madison, Wisconsin

- the Down syndrome community. One in every 700 babies born in the U.S. is born with Down syndrome. Delayed cognitive capacities is a primary consequence, but with few exceptions, people with Down syndrome attend public school, some go on to college and many hold down regular jobs. However, individuals with Down syndrome wear their disability on their face and regularly experience inequity and exclusion that creates an insurmountable barrier to achievement and life-long success. Parents report their children experience exclusion from regular education classrooms, social activities, sports, job training and professional development opportunities. To promote academic achievement, inclusion, and life-long learning, GiGi's Playhouse-Madison offers the following programs:

- 1) Speech & Language – supports the increase of clarity of speech and enunciation, word order, message meaning and comprehension which benefits self-confidence, school and social readiness, and leads to increased independence and overall quality of life.
- 2) Literacy/Reading: supports the increase of sight word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, articulation, self-esteem, speech clarity and fine motor skills.
- 3) Math Tutoring - promotes a positive experience of learning mathematics with a sound foundation of basic number understanding, including counting, addition and money handling skills.
- 4) Language Music N' Our Peeps (LMNOP) is a weekly group class that guides parents and children through learning basic sign language and other forms of communication while using music and language-based activities.
- 5) Kids Club – a weekly group class that supports the development of social skills and language through peer-to-peer interaction. This program also supports gross motor skills through active games, fine motor and self-help skills through meal/snack preparation and activities.
- 6) Teen Tastic – a weekly group class that focuses on building social skills with friends with and without Down syndrome by participating in team-based activities. Skill development includes understanding compromise, turn-taking and problem-solving abilities.
- 7) SMART – a weekly group class to support adults with Down syndrome with social skills and independent living skills development.

Funding from the Wispact Foundation is requested to support two programs that the agency would like to expand – GiGi's Fit and GiGi's Kitchen.

Project Goals and Expected Benefits

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Goal: To improve health and wellness outcomes for individuals with Down syndrome by providing physical fitness, nutrition, and recreation classes.

Objectives:

1) GiGiFit utilizes targeted exercises specific to the needs of individuals (from children to adult) with Down syndrome to help improve strength, balance, coordination, and to build a love of recreation and physical activity. Activities include conditioning and strengthening exercises, yoga, dance, martial arts, jogging, stationary biking, obstacle courses, game play and health education. The objective is to offer the GiGi Fit program as a weekly stand-alone class for children, teens and adults, with 40 participants served. Sessions will be offered in 10-week increments, with a spring, summer and fall session, for a total of 30 weeks. 100% of participants will increase their weekly exercise patterns to include both cardio and weight training exercises, increase water intake, and will learn to prepare healthy meals.

2) GiGi's Kitchen is a group class designed for teens and adults with Down syndrome and emphasizes the importance of health and wellness, as well as fosters safe and healthy independent living through nutrition education, kitchen safety, and food preparation. Participants learn about measurements, food handling, knife skills, ingredient identification, palette expansion, nutrition, and various cooking techniques. The program will serve 40 students per year. Sessions will be offered in 10-week increments, with a spring, summer and fall session, for a total of 30 weeks. 100% of participants will improve their level of comfort navigating their home kitchen, will develop fine motor skills to handle cooking utensils, will increase their understanding of nutrition, will learn a minimum of four new healthy recipes per session, and will be able to demonstrate safety techniques in the kitchen and with food handling.

## **Project Implementation Plan**

GiGi's Playhouse-Madison employs a full-time Site Manager and a full-time Program and Volunteer Coordinator, as well as receives support from 150 volunteers. These two programs have been offered virtually for the last two years due to pandemic-related public health guidelines. With the loosening of these guidelines, the playhouse would like to expand the services by offering these classes in-person at the playhouse, as 10-week sessions offered in spring, summer and fall. Virtual/on-demand sessions remain available on our website for students unable to attend in-person classes.

## **Evaluation Plan**

The long-term goal of these two programs is to contribute to the health and well-being of children and adults with Down syndrome by providing learning experiences that can lead to the adoption of an active and healthy lifestyle. This goal will be met through the following objectives: 1) Increased participation in physical activities for individuals with Down syndrome through various types of exercise; 2) Development of tools to provide to parents and caregivers to create ongoing fitness, nutrition, and recreation opportunities at home or in the community; 3) Motivation of participants to independently practice life-long physical activities and adopt healthy eating practices at home and in the community. Program outcomes will be measured using a student tracker system that captures baseline knowledge, and changes in learning patterns throughout the 10-week session. The student tracker allows instructors to adjust learning for any student that might be struggling in meeting certain learning milestones, as well as measure improvements in skills from start to end of class.

## Budget

Funding requested from the Wispact Foundation will be utilized to support the expansion of our GiGi Fit and GiGi's Kitchen classes to include in-person learning, in addition to the on-demand/virtual sessions that are currently offered.

### Budget GiGi Fit and GiGi Kitchen

Volunteer and Program Coordinator – 1.0 FTE @ .20 (8 hours per week) \$43,000 annual salary @ .20 FTE	\$8,600
Volunteer and Program Coordinator benefits (30% of annual salary x .20)	\$2,580
Site Manager – 1.0 FTE @ .10 (4 hours per week) - \$48,000 annual salary @.10	\$4,800
Site Manager benefits (30% of annual salary x .10 FTE)	\$1,440
Contract Program Leaders – GiGi Fit Fitness Instructors \$100.00/week x 30 weeks	\$3,000
Cooking materials, ingredients, and supplies for 40 students for 30 weeks \$5.00 per student x 40 students x 30 weeks	\$6,000
Fitness supplies including mats, bands, weight balls, sand weights, parachutes adaptive fitness equipment, Bosu balls.	\$7,000
Rent/space usage of playhouse	\$15,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$48,420</b>
<b>Revenues Secured</b>	
Green Bay Packers Foundation (for GiGi Fit)	\$5,000
GiGi's Acceptance Fun Run/Walk Fundraiser	\$30,000
Individual donations	\$3,420
<b>Total Secured Revenue</b>	<b>\$38,420</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>

## Staff Recommendation

The grant can be recommended for approval. While the program leaders could not be included this would exceed the \$10,000.00 cap so it will be omitted from what grant proceeds can provide for. The \$10,000.00 grant can be awarded and applied toward the cooking materials and fitness supplies.