

## **Gigi's Playhouse Fox Point Summary Report**

### **Information about the Applicant**

At GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee we envision a world where individuals with Down syndrome are accepted and embraced in their families, schools and communities – working to overcome the stigma, discrimination and challenges faced by people with intellectual/cognitive disabilities. We are making this vision a reality by offering FREE educational, therapeutic, and social programming specially designed for individuals with Down syndrome. Our inclusive and lifelong approach supports individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities, and our free, mostly volunteer-led programs help kids, teens and adults develop, learn and grow, and address the physical and mental challenges they face to live a healthy life, with the ultimate goal of achieving greater independence.

GiGi's Playhouse Milwaukee is one of 50+ brick and mortar locations across the United States and Mexico. We are part of the national GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Centers organization, who provides us a franchise model, program design, and resources for operations. However, 100% of our funding comes from local charitable sources and our programming is led by local volunteers and business/college partnerships.

While our focus is serving individuals with Down syndrome, our inclusive programming benefits participants with multiple disabilities and diagnoses; and their parents, siblings and friends find value in our programming as well by opening their minds and hearts to what our participants can achieve. In 2021, we welcomed 333 unique participants to our programming, with many taking advantage of multiple programs. We also added 50 new families, for a total of 451 families served.

### **Statement of Need**

Our research-driven, results-based programs offer academic support/achievement, healthy development and economic achievement from birth through adulthood. Our programs (designed by experts to address common challenges for individuals with DS) teach life/career skills, gross & fine motor skills, health & wellness, reading, math, STEAM, speech & language, behavioral & social-emotional skills, and more. All of our programming is free (no registration, materials fees, etc.), removing the barrier of cost for our families. Most recently, with COVID-19, our organization was able to quickly provide virtual on-demand and live programming (GiGi's At Home), in addition to our in-person programming with increased safety measures and COVID mitigation practices. With individuals with disabilities disproportionately affected by COVID-19, our participants were left without many of their connections to therapies, school and friends. The pandemic limited access to school and medical services, and distance schooling added barriers to learning for students with disabilities. The services and programs we provide are COVID relief, helping to fill the gaps and make up for lost time learning. A grant from Wispact would support our signature programs for participants of all ages. All of our programming is funded 100% through local charitable sources. We continually fundraise to support our families and successfully receive funding through grants (~45%), events (~30%) and individual donations (~25%). Now in our seventh year of operation, we are focused on growth and capacity building as demand for our services and population served continue to grow.

### **Project Goals and Expected Benefits**

Our goals for programming in 2023 are to grow our population served by at least 10% year over year, and offer at least 16 programs with increased participation of at least 10%. We measure our progress against these goals through our robust registration and computerized sign-in system and tracking. GiGi's research-driven, results-based programs unleash joy, confidence, and continuous improvement.

## **Project Implementation Plan**

Our full-time program/volunteer coordinator ensures proper implementation of GiGi's programs and lesson plans, and facilitates proper training of program leaders using the GiGi's method. We have made great strides in creating partnerships with institutions such as Marquette University, Carroll University, UW-Milwaukee, Cardinal Stritch, Alverno, Mount Mary, and Concordia to increase volunteerism for tutors and program leaders. Within these partnerships, the college students often earn clinical hours or course credit for their work with our participants – a win-win situation. We offer three sessions of our signature programming each year, with current offerings to include program videos.

- One-on-One Literacy and Math Tutoring supports the increase of sight word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, articulation, math skills, problem solving, critical thinking, self-esteem, speech clarity and fine motor skills (ages 3+) (tutors paired individually with students); Book Club is held weekly for teens and adults to hone literacy skills in a group setting and facilitated by a volunteer leader.
- Destination Discovery supports fine motor, gross motor, social skills and language through purposeful play and peer to peer interaction, focusing on STEM activities (all ages) (led by volunteer teacher)
- Amina Grace One-on-One Speech & Language supports clarity of speech, enunciation, word order, message meaning and comprehension, which benefits self-confidence, school and social readiness, increased independence and overall quality of life (led by Marquette University's Speech Pathology and Audiology Department) (ages 2-12)
- Art Explosion provides hands-on experience with multiple art media and an outlet to express themselves (led by art therapist) (all ages); Music Therapy supports the increase of self-confidence, social skills, communication, and motor skills (led by students in the Carroll University Music Therapy program) (all ages)
- GiGi Kitchen age-level programs emphasize health & wellness and teach kitchen skills through nutrition, kitchen safety, and food preparation. (school-age kids+)
- GiGiFIT age-level programs combine physical therapy with a strong fitness focus and an ultimate goal of improved movement. Created in collaboration with skilled Physical Therapists, programs address common issues for individuals with DS including hypotonia, excessive joint laxity, and decreased balance. GiGiFIT is offered both in the Playhouse for youngest participants (lead by a pediatric Physical Therapist) and out in the community for our older participants, at Balance Fitness and D1 Training Center. Having a partnership with these professional gyms allows our participants to take advantage of their gym space and equipment, but also shows the community that our participants are just like them – seeking health, wellness and fitness at the local gym. (all age groups)
- Early Childhood programs: LMNOP (0-4) guides parents and young children through basic sign language and other forms of communication while using music and language-based activities (led by a UWM professor that teaches sign language); Leaps & Bounds (3-5) focuses on success in preschool and kindergarten, following routines, small group participation, movement and interaction (led by Marquette University Occupational Therapy Department)
- School-Age programs: Playhouse Pals (5-8) and Kids Club (9-12) Kids Club support the development of social skills and language through peer-to-peer interaction, gross motor, fine motor and self-help skills (led by Marquette University Occupational Therapy Department)
- Teen and Adult programs: Teen Tastic (13-17) focuses on social skills with friends with and without DS. Fantastic Friends (18+) supports social skills and language through peer interaction.

- GiGi Prep: New in 2021, this career development program has an emphasis on building communication skills, money management, customer service skills, team building and wellness. This program is an application-based program with high expectations to motivate adults with DS. (Led by Mount Mary Occupational Therapy students)

### Evaluation Plan

Outcomes are tracked in most of our programs (exceptions include social programs) to ensure participant progress and improvement on stated goals relevant to the program's purpose (see descriptions in the next section). These outcomes are developed specific to the participant, and are reported and tracked via program leader progress reports and parent surveys. Baseline experience and expectations are established with the help of our application process.

### Budget

Please see the attached line-item program budget that details our program expenditures. Total costs for our signature programming (\$136,000) is split into three categories: Administrative Costs (program coordination/scheduling, volunteer orientation & training, marketing/communication) (\$80,000 60%), Facility & Rental Costs (\$42,000 30%), Materials & Outside Fees (\$14,000 10%). Most of our programs are volunteer led, keeping our costs low. We have many believers in our mission. Within the last year, we have received more than \$75,000 in grant funds in support of our programming (with more than a dozen funders and several multi-year funders), plus our special event income grew by 45% in 2021 to cover the balance of our programming costs.

	Administrative Cost	Facility & Rental Cost	Materials/Outside Fees	Total Budget
Art Explosion	\$4,510.21	\$4,396.54	\$500.00	\$9,406.75
Book Club	\$6,425.12	\$2,734.43	\$360.00	\$9,519.55
Destination Discovery	\$660.00	\$2,385.93	\$500.00	\$3,545.93
Fantastic Friends*	\$1,861.89	\$7,774.36	\$500.00	\$10,136.25
GiGiFIT	\$7,618.90	\$4,494.83	\$6,480.00	\$18,593.73
GiGi Kitchen	\$1,531.89	\$3,965.37	\$1,800.00	\$7,297.26
Gigi Prep*	\$1,500.00	\$1,340.41	\$576.00	\$3,416.41
Kids Club/Playhouse Pals	\$1,955.67	\$375.31	\$500.00	\$2,830.98
Leaps and Bounds	\$651.89	\$375.31	\$500.00	\$1,527.20
LMNOP	\$871.89	\$670.20	\$200.00	\$1,742.09
Music	\$6,917.11	\$1,501.26	\$250.00	\$8,668.37
Speech	\$4,335.12	\$1,340.41	\$100.00	\$5,775.53
Teen Tastic	\$1,641.89	\$3,377.83	\$500.00	\$5,519.72
Tutoring	\$22,445.60	\$6,608.21	\$650.00	\$29,703.81
OT/PT	\$16,573.20	\$1,340.41	\$500.00	\$18,413.61
* adult program				<b>Total \$136,097.20</b>

Note: Administrative costs include program coordination/scheduling, volunteer orientation & training, marketing

### Staff Recommendation

A grant can be approved for the requested amount of \$10,000.00 to applied to Materials costs associated with the programs offered by Gigi's Play House. The materials align with the foundation initiatives and will directly benefit the persons with disabilities served by the organization.