



Down Syndrome Achievement Centers
educate. inspire. believe.

**March 12, 2017
PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Post Photo Release:

**Mario Lopez and other stars shined for individuals with Down syndrome at GiGi's Playhouse
2017 "i have a voice" Chicagoland Gala**

Nearly \$600,000 was raised to support free life-changing programming for children and adults with Down syndrome

(March 12, 2017) Hoffman Estates, ILL –Special guests, Mario Lopez, Emmy-winning host of hit entertainment show "Extra," CBS 2 Chicago anchor Rob Johnson, and 12 retired NFL players, along with 850+ Chicagoland area residents came together for the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland Gala on Saturday, March 11, at Drury Lane in Oakbrook Terrace, Ill.

This year's gala raised nearly \$600,000 to support free, life-changing programming such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more for children and adults with Down syndrome.

"My heart is full with the incredible amount of love, energy and support I felt in the room for GiGi's Playhouse," says Nancy Gianni, GiGi's Playhouse Founder and Chief Belief Officer. "From Mario (Lopez) taking time out of his schedule to join us in celebrating the achievements our organization has made since we met him 4 years ago on the set of EXTRA, to the generosity of our guests, donating their time and money, our dream of helping GiGi's Playhouse achieve its mission of breaking down barriers and creating a national movement of acceptance for all continues to grow beyond my wildest dreams."

With its national office based in Hoffman Estates, GiGi's Playhouse is the only international network of free-standing Down Syndrome Achievement Centers. With more than 30 locations around the country and in Mexico, GiGi's Playhouse delivers free educational and therapeutic programs to children and adults to maximize achievement and acceptance. GiGi's Playhouse advances its vision for global acceptance through the Generation G campaign: Be Generous, Be Kind Be Accepting. The Chicagoland gala was one of 30 GiGi's Playhouse galas held nationwide.

EVENT PHOTOS AND VIDEO BELOW:

Caption: GiGi's Playhouse founder, Nancy Gianni, and guest of honor, EXTRA TV host, Mario Lopez, at the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland gala. Proceeds from the gala will go towards enriching children and adults with Down syndrome through life-changing programs such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1Pygbu6LpLrQXRzUno0T3l2enp0MG1oa2Z2RHRqSnJtCs1Z>

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Caption: The evening's emcee, CBS Chicago anchor, Rob Johnson and GiGi's Playhouse participant, Nicole Stachiw, pump up the crowd during the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland gala. Proceeds from the gala will go towards enriching children and adults with Down syndrome through life-changing programs such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1Pygbu6LpLrcWtpQ1pjOVk5RDZsUXcxb3Axb1ZGdm51ZmdB>

Caption: GiGi's Playhouse guest of honor, EXTRA TV's Mario Lopez, greeted guests during the opening portion of the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland gala. Lopez has a personal connection to the organization as he met the organization's namesake, GiGi Gianni, four years ago on the set of EXTRA. Proceeds from the gala will go towards enriching children and adults with Down syndrome through life-changing programs such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1Pygbu6LpLrNVBtLXQ2LVdEV282bzd6RXdSR1N1cTQtSzVB>

Caption: GiGi's Playhouse founder and president, Nancy Gianni, with GiGi's Playhouse participants during the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland gala. Gianni founded GiGi's Playhouse in 2003 to support and empower individuals and families living and dealing with Down syndrome. Proceeds from the gala will go towards enriching children and adults with Down syndrome through life-changing programs such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1Pygbu6LpLrUlczRkstdWlleDhHYWNCbWo4c2F6ZHfKTTNn>

Caption: GiGi's Playhouse guest of honor, EXTRA TV's Mario Lopez with the organization's namesake, GiGi Gianni, enjoy a moment together during the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland gala. Proceeds from the gala will go towards enriching children and adults with Down syndrome through life-changing programs such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1Pygbu6LpLrV0lWR2F5aDc2ejEzZHB1ak9SVGEwNzdJcmJn>

Caption: GiGi's Playhouse founder, Nancy Gianni, and former NFL players at the 2017 GiGi's Playhouse "i have a voice" Chicagoland gala. Proceeds from the gala will go towards enriching children and adults with Down syndrome through life-changing programs such as one-on-one literacy and math tutoring, speech therapy, fitness classes, career training and more.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1Pygbu6LpLrNnJqTGtzQ0ROLUZpZIZLc183bFFEVENIaUVF>

Broll video:

General Event Footage: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/vhaxk4e3ozy1pgp/gigis-gala-eventbroll.mp4?dl=0>

Additional Event Footage (Mario and Nancy): <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qb8ky5qo6otyet7/Gigis-Gala-Broll.mp4?dl=0>

Nancy Gianni soundbite: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8qrb7irlchgtwrij/nancy-soundbite-01.mp4?dl=0>

Mario Lopez soundbite #1: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/f72mu8snc0ca3h7/mario-soundbite-01.mp4?dl=0>

Mario Lopez soundbite #2: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/74y5j3a0qk0wwhk/mario-soundbite-02.mp4?dl=0>

Mario Lopez soundbite #3: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6uzqahazei6an8c/mario-soundbite-03.mp4?dl=0>

More About GiGi's Playhouse

Founded in 2003, GiGi's Playhouse is the only international network of Down syndrome achievement centers, changing lives through free programs for individuals of all ages. The organization makes a lifetime commitment to support and empower families from diagnosis to adulthood. GiGi's Playhouse also works to break down barriers and change the way the world sees people who are different, by promoting acceptance for all through the #GenerationG campaign. The goal is to have a GiGi's Playhouse in every state by 2021. The organization's national recognition is growing, with founder Nancy Gianni being named a 2016 CNN Hero. In October, she was featured on the national

“Steve Harvey Show” as a “Game Changing Woman.” GiGi’s Playhouse survives completely on donor funds and is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization. For more information about how you can help, visit www.GiGisplayhouse.org.

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