

# 2026 WOMEN UNITED GRANT APPLICATION FORM

## Organization Information

**Organization Name**

GiGi's Playhouse Lancaster

**EIN**

84-3214187

**Project Name**

Enhancing the Well Being of Teen & Adult Women with Down Syndrome

**Address**

2501 Oregon Pike  
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United States

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**Executive Director / President (If different)**

Kevin Hewitt

## Eligibility Criteria

**Is your organization a registered nonprofit organization with an official letter of determination of 501c3 status from the Internal Revenue Service?**

Yes

**Has your organization operated in Lancaster County for at least one year (operating in Lancaster before July 1, 2025?)**

Yes

**Does your organization or program you are requesting funding for in this application serve primarily women and/ or teen girls?**

No

**Does your organization provide services to families at or below the ALICE threshold in Lancaster County?**

Yes

**Is your organization delinquent on any state or federal debt?**

No

**Does your organization share United Way's view of collaborative and inclusive service to the entire**

**community, without excluding anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor not relevant to a person's eligibility for service or ability to contribute?**

Yes

**Has your organization update your listing with PA 211 in the last 12 months?**

Yes

## **Application Elements**

### **Executive Summary**

GiGi's Playhouse was created to change the way the world views a Down syndrome diagnosis and send a global message of acceptance for all.

We understand that many families are first-time parents, and they need us. Many young parents do not expect, or know in advance of their child's diagnosis, and they need renewed hope and genuine acceptance from day one.

At GiGi's Playhouse families are never alone. From a prenatal diagnosis to career skills, we make a lifetime commitment to remain by their side. Families are empowered with all the tools their child needs to succeed!

Back in the summer of 2002, Nancy Gianni gave birth to her beautiful daughter, GiGi. She quickly realized that GiGi could do the very same things that her other children do! What began as a mother's vision to change perception, and maximize her daughter's successes, has evolved into a global movement of acceptance. Nancy needed to get GiGi, and her other children, ready for the world ahead - and get the world ready for GiGi!

The very first Playhouse was created to be an inspirational and dedicated place for families to celebrate their child and benefit from free, purposeful programs that unleash joy, confidence and continuous improvement. More than 61 Playhouses empower children and adults to achieve their "Best of All" and to pursue their dreams.

### **Organization Description**

We are a Down syndrome organization with over 61+ brick-and-mortar locations across the United States and Mexico and 200 inquiries to start new locations all over the world, GiGi's Playhouse is the ONLY network of Down Syndrome Achievement Centers. Every day, we provide FREE, life-changing therapeutic, educational, and career training programs for 30,000+ individuals of all ages.

Down syndrome is the largest chromosomal disability in our country and yet, it is the least funded. From a prenatal diagnosis to career skills, we make a lifetime commitment to remain by their side. Families are empowered with all the tools their child needs to succeed!

Through free programs and through our Generation G Campaign for global acceptance, we EMPOWER families by maximizing opportunities for daily achievement and lasting acceptance. To ensure lasting acceptance, we must show the world what individuals with Down syndrome are truly capable of achieving as students, co-workers, volunteers, friends, and valued members of their communities. Our program outcomes help advance this vital social impact goal.

GiGi's Playhouse is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is solely funded by donations.

### **Commitment to Equity**

Our Purpose:

To change the way the world views Down syndrome and to send a global message of acceptance for all.

Our Mission:

We make a lifetime commitment to changing lives and providing hope through the consistent delivery of FREE educational, therapeutic, and career development programs for individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community, using a replicable playhouse model.

Our Vision:

To see a world where individuals with Down syndrome are accepted and embraced in their families, schools, and communities.

Our Promise:

A lifetime commitment to families.

Down syndrome does not discriminate across socio-economic status or race, so anyone of any background can have a child born with Down syndrome. All programs offered at GiGi's are free to families, as we never want cost to be a barrier to achievement. This allows families from all socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, geography, language, family structure and housing status to participate.

## Proposal Details

### Main Priority Area

Women's and/ or Teen's Health

### Grant Dollar Amount Requested

\$10,000.00

### What percent of the overall project budget is covered by the Women United grant?

10

### Will this program/project start or continue to operate if you do not receive 100% of the funding requested?

Yes

### Project Description

We are seeking \$10,000 in funding to continue our health-based programs for our teen and adult women participants with Down syndrome.

At GiGi's Playhouse Lancaster, we have about 85 teen and adult women consistently participate in the following programs that teach ways to build and sustain a healthy lifestyle, including fitness, nutrition, and social-emotional. We work on keeping their minds and bodies moving!

GiGiFIT Teen & GiGiFIT Adult & Nutrition:

Description: The GiGiFIT programs are designed to address common issues for individuals with Down syndrome including hypotonia, excessive joint laxity, and decreased balance. Every GiGiFIT program is safe, effective, and progressive. GiGiFIT helps participants build strength, endurance, power, joint stability, balance, and movement control. GiGiFIT empowers participants to be more independent and confident in their abilities while improving their overall health and wellness! Participants participate in group fitness for one hour per week and thirty minutes of nutrition education per week.

GiGi's Kitchen Adult:

Description: Our GiGi's Kitchen programs are designed to support individuals with Down syndrome by emphasizing the importance of a healthy lifestyle and early exposure to practical cooking skills. Under the guidance of program leaders, participants will engage in activities designed to promote healthy eating habits, kitchen safety awareness, food preparation skills, self-confidence, and social skills by applying learned skills as they prepare and enjoy a shared meal/snack! Participants participate in this three hour program once per week.

GiGi's University/GiGi Prep (adult-education programming):

Descriptions:

- GiGi Prep – The GiGi Prep program has an emphasis on building communication skills, money management, customer service skills, team building, nutrition, yoga, health and wellness over a 10-17-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.

- GiGi's University – A comprehensive and progressive learning program tailored specifically for adults with Down syndrome comprised of a 15-week session made up of 3-days per week instructional program. 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.

GiGi's Achievers:

The GiGi's Achievers program empowers adults with Down syndrome with purposeful activities to ensure continued learning and fulfillment of life. This program teaches and promotes communication, self-awareness, independence, health and wellness through community engagement. Each lesson will provide participants with "hands on" learning experiences in a naturally occurring environment. Participants work on social skills, group games, communication and more.

GiGi's Dance Teen & Adult:

Introduces basic dance styles, techniques and movements to participants while improving gross motor skills, increasing mental and muscle memory and increasing cardiovascular conditioning, strength, flexibility and coordination.

Amina Grace Speech & Language:

The GiGi's Amina Grace Speech and Language one-on-one program provides youth, teens and adults with greatly expanded opportunities to evolve and refine their speech and language skills. 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.

## **Collaboration**

We plan to continue partnering with local schools, universities, and colleges to provide volunteers to join us at GiGi's to participate alongside our teen and adult women with Down syndrome. This provides opportunity for modeling, demonstration, social skill development and relationship building among the students and participants. We welcome the opportunity for others to come in to build our community collaboration.

## **Implementation Plan**

The requested funding will be allocated to our programs in 2026/2027 as follows:

GiGiFIT: Weekly fitness and nutrition program for three sessions per year: spring, summer, fall; Lead by a trained instructor and volunteers; Follow a prescribed plan of exercises of warm ups, squats, push ups, obstacle course, cool down, etc. Nutrition portions include instruction on My Plate, healthy portions, healthy choices, eating a balanced diet, limited sugars, etc.

GiGi Kitchen: Weekly cooking class for three sessions per year: spring, summer, fall; Lead by trained instructors and volunteers. Build skills related to measuring, cutting, pouring, stirring, using kitchen tools, utensils, equipment, setting the table, doing dishes, taking out trash, etc.

GiGi Prep & University: Twice per week program for three sessions per year; spring, summer, fall; Lead by trained instructors and volunteers. Build skills related to team building, communication, job exploration, speech, math, money, reading, writing, nutrition, etc. Community trips planned, as available.

GiGi's Achievers: Weekly program for three sessions per year: spring, summer, fall; Lead by trained instructors and volunteers. Plan activities based on themes and holidays, encouraging journaling, conversation, get to know you activities, peer and social interactions, fitness, nutrition, following directions, expressing yourself through art and

music and more.

GiGi's Dance Teen and Adult: Weekly program for three sessions per year: spring, summer, fall; Lead by trained instructors and volunteers. Work on gross motor skills, balance, strength, following directions and working on a team to express yourself through dance

Amina Grace Speech and Language Program: Weekly 1:1 or group program for three sessions per year: spring, summer, fall; Lead by licensed contracted speech-language pathologists. Work on speaking more clearly to be understood in conversations, to express wants and needs, advocate for your independence, share about your own body, express to others how you feel, and increase overall well-being. This program helps to increase their voice so they can be heard in their home, workplace, community, etc.

### **Outcomes & Evaluation**

We will be able to continue to implement these programs for teen and adult women with Down syndrome. We will observe Best of All moments, doing one time better than the time they did before, and write it to be displayed on our Best of All wall in our Playhouse Family Room. We will also use skills tracking sheets to measure skill levels and independence in the GiGi's Kitchen Adult program after they complete and cook the recipe of the week. We will also be able to look through journals completed by participants in our GiGi's Achievers program. We will be able to informally assess and look through completed work in binders of our GiGi Prep participants. Our speech therapist tracks weekly outcomes online for speech goals for each participant that can be reviewed to track progress. We also give pre and post assessments in our GiGiFIT Teen and Adult program to see if they lose weight, lose inches, increase their grip strength, if they can jump further, do more push ups, etc. Our programming has the capability to change lives for those living with Down syndrome and their family. Families may feel more equipped and prepared to care for their child. Participants may be able to use their voice for advocacy and independence. They may also be healthier, so they can participate more and longer in activities with their friends, family, and community.

### **Documents**

#### **Required Documents**

- [GiGis-Playhouse-Lancaster-Key-Board-Staff-and-Personnel-3.26.docx](#)
- [GiGis-PNL-Dec-24.pdf](#)
- [GPL-Statement-of-Financial-Position-12.24.pdf](#)
- [Women-United-Grant-Budget-DRAFT-2.xlsx](#)
- [GiGis-Playhouse-Lancaster-IRS-documentation-501c3-status.pdf](#)