



GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh  
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PROFILE

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## THE VOICE BEHIND GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE ONLINE PRESENCE

CARY, N.C. – A quick scroll through GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh's social media pages shows just how much care goes into each post. The photos, videos, and captions capture genuine joy and show it's written by someone who truly knows the individuals at the heart of this community. This is not accidental. It is the work of MacKailey Braga, the social media coordinator for GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh, whose blend of creativity, empathy, and personal connection has shaped the digital voice of the Playhouse into one that feels deeply welcoming.



*Photo from GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh Website*

"I've always loved getting to know people," Braga said, reflecting on the early sparks that would lead to the beginning of her career. "Each one of us, as cliché as it is, has our own interesting story, and I love the uniqueness in everyone's journey."

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Her passion for people's stories deepened further through growing up alongside her sister, who has Down syndrome, a relationship that shaped not only her worldview but also her commitment to representing others with care.

Braga grew up during what she calls "the rise of the internet," a time when young creatives everywhere were picking up cameras before they were old enough to drive. She noticed she was drawn to both sides: watching people's stories unfold online and shaping her own through editing and design. That curiosity, paired with her desire to listen to others, eventually led her to pursue advertising, a field she describes as broad and flexible.

Her mother, who studied journalism, planted early seeds as well. Around middle school, Braga remembers recognizing that she wanted to follow a similar path, and advertising offered that. Still, she says, "I felt drawn to knowing other people's stories and knew subconsciously I wanted to do something with that passion."

While education built her toolbox for storytelling, it was her family that gave it meaning and heart. Braga's sister has been a guiding force in her life. The bond they share brought Braga to GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh with an understanding many new employees simply cannot have on day one.

"My connection made it so I could jump into my work on an incredibly personable level," she explained. "Out of getting to know her and the love I have for her, the mission GiGi's is on was something I already had set out to do and hoped for since she was born, just on a much broader and established scale."

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When focusing on her sister's influence, Braga says, "She leaves me in awe of all the qualities that make her, her. It leads me to hold the importance of this job fondly given that the world has the chance to view these people just as amazingly." Her reflection conveys why her approach to social media feels so intentional and authentic. Every story she shares is rooted in a desire to ensure others see the same capability she sees at home.

As the social media coordinator, Braga is the heart behind GiGi's Playhouse Raleigh's online presence. Her work helps shape how thousands of people including local families, volunteers, donors, and supporters across the nation understand the mission of acceptance and inclusion for people with Down syndrome.

Balancing national and local identity is important across each social platform. GiGi's operates under the saying "Locally Minded, Enterprise Concerned," something Braga takes to heart. "We share the same goals," she said, "but we act as individual organizations, in terms of who we're trying to get connected with: donors, volunteers, participants."

"GiGi's in general does a really good job of highlighting exactly what its mission is," Braga said. "To show that people with Down syndrome have as much of a rightful place in society as people who don't, and they're capable just as much. It's just a matter of highlighting that and showcasing what that could look like if we could all get on the same page of that being a true thing." Through storytelling, she's helping the world see what she has always seen in her sister: brilliance, individuality, and potential.

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While advertising gave her creative and strategic skills, her minor in American Sign Language and Deaf Studies offered something she can use on a daily basis: the ability to connect through different forms of communication. “My studies exposed me to the beautiful culture and vast history of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community,” she said. “They hold many similarities to those with Down syndrome. It is such a large group of individuals who are full of amazing perspectives and admirable characteristics, yet have been historically underserved and oppressed.” This experience taught her to be a better ally and advocate.

Many creatives spend years waiting to feel the true impact of their work, however, Braga felt it almost instantly at GiGi’s. “GiGi’s has given me purpose beyond enjoyment for creativity and my craft,” she said. “There’s a visible, tangible impact with what we do, and that encouragement isn’t something I’ve had the honor of feeling prior.” Whether she is covering the ‘i have a Voice’ gala, capturing small joys in the Playhouse, or highlighting volunteer moments, her work reflects what she believes in.

Braga values using creative gifts for good. “Your style is important, it’s needed, it’s what makes you, you,” she said. “Your talents could be what help bring important missions like GiGi’s into much-needed spotlights... your style is invaluable and uniquely yours, so share it.” She understands what it feels like to wonder whether your ideas matter, especially in a world that often celebrates conformity, but she encourages young creators not to lose sight of their potential.

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In many ways, Braga's work focuses on enhancing perspectives that deserve to be seen and understood. She highlights the individuality, strengths, and everyday moments within the Down syndrome community. For her, storytelling goes beyond just posting updates, it's about building genuine connections and reflecting the people she serves with honesty and care.

As she reflects on her future and the future of the mission, she puts it simply: "We operate in a world where some of the things we're striving for don't exist yet, so we need creatives like you to find the courage even when it's hard."

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