

To Whom May Concern:

My son Jalen came to Little People's Place in September 2002, two months after his second birthday. Up until that point, he had been cared for by close family members, including my mother and my aunt. He was not accustomed to being in the company of other children and he was fluent in both English and my native language, Cape Verdean, but could express mostly in Cape Verdean. The idea of finding a good daycare for him was very worrisome to me. As a working parent in New York, it was important to find a loving place, a place that would be as warm and familiar to my child as his home was. This sort of place seemed impossible to find. When I thought I found a great place, I consistently also found I could not afford it.

A friend of mine recommended Little People's Place. I met Ms. Theresa McNeil at the center. She took me to visit the Home Day Care as well that same evening. A great burden was lifted off my shoulders—I had found a "home" for my son, and I could afford it! Everything at Little People's Place was top notch: the facility was spacious, welcoming, immaculately clean, and safe. I had access to everything and immediately encouraged to visit anytime or participate in any of the many activities. The staff was professional and most importantly incredibly warm and loving with the children. The children were comfortable and visibly happy. The very atmosphere of the place attested to the great work that is done there—the work of loving and helping to raise children. It was particularly compelling to me that I was able to find all this conveniently located (on the way to my job) at 145th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, and for a price I could afford. Little People's Place, Inc is that great rarity—a great service to the community, being provided by a member of the community for the children in the community.

My son's adjustment phase only lasted about one week. After that one week, he could hardly wait to get to school and he had to be reminded to say goodbye to mommy. I found this amazing, especially for a child who had spent the first two years of his life in the care of close family members and without much interaction with other babies. Two weeks after starting there Jalen's vocabulary had increased dramatically and he was chatting up a storm, in English. His progress has never stopped. Well before turning three Jalen could recognize most and then eventually all of the letters in the alphabet. Today he can recognize and write his own name. He knows his numbers to 20, he tells me the date of the month everyday when we get home. He recites his days of the week in both Spanish and English. People (who are not Little People's Place parents, of course) are always surprised at his social skills and at how great he is with other children.

My son is a bright kid, I give him credit. But the fact is that he has had been receiving consistent intellectual and emotional stimulation on a consistent basis at Little People's Place. Because I work, I don't have the ability to spend those critical hours with him everyday, making his playing pedagogically productive and helping him "be a kid" in the best possible way. I have been able to completely rely on Little People's Place to do that for Jalen, and the staff there has more than covered for me.