

*“For many reasons, it gave me a lot of hope,
To know that Langs was there and that we
could use it”*

At 32 years of age and on the eve of their daughters second birthday Shawna Percy was told her husband was dead. A coroner’s report later revealed that Neil Percy had died by suicide. As she wrestled with her own shock and grief Shawna worked hard to support her young daughter A.J. in dealing with the loss of her father.

Two years later in the fall of 2013 Alexis entered junior kindergarten a happy, outgoing, confident child. Soon after the school year began however, A.J. told her Mom that a particular child was calling her names and hitting her. *“I just kind of assumed ok there's been a dispute with a toy car and somebody got upset and hit you, something little like that. I figured she needs to learn the skills to manage how to work her way through those situations.”* Shawna sadly recounts. The school took the same approach. But as Shawna says guiltily, *“In her mind she had been telling the adults in her life that she was being badly treated and nobody was helping her.”*

The bullying escalated until Shawna felt she had no choice but to remove A.J. from school entirely. It was a gut-wrenching decision, followed by the anxiety of how to keep her child engaged, socialized and learning while rebuilding her shattered confidence. *“The saddest thing was because of the stuff that happened in school; she just started to disappear inside herself.”* Shawna describes. Worried and heart sick Shawna turned to Langs.

She enrolled A.J. in one of Langs after school programs (formerly called Popcorn House) an affordable (\$1 a day) daily program with a focus on healthy living, social and emotional support and fun. Over time Shawna saw positive attributes being pulled out in all the

children in the program. Slowly but surely A.J.'s confidence began to grow.

“I think the core of what Langs did for my daughter is that they gave her an hour a day where she could just be a kid.” says Shawna.

In addition there were leaders that A.J. could look up to. For A.J. her relationship with one counsellor in particular has stayed with her. *“She saved her own money and bought this really expensive doll and then she named it Dana after Dana in the program. That's how much she influenced her and gave her this bright light to hang on to in one of the darkest times in her young life.”*

The family has since moved to a new community where A.J. is enrolled in a new school. Her Mom reports that A.J. has come back to herself. *“She's happy, she's confident, she doesn't have any stomach pains anymore.”* It scares Shawna to think what might have happened if they hadn't been able to take such drastic steps to help her child, if they hadn't had the ability to move her, to move her family. But she believes that is all the more reason why Langs is so vital to its community. It offers much needed programs and services to children and families no matter what their circumstance.

“I wish I could find adequate words to express the depth of my gratitude to Langs because it really was the hope and the bright spot for us during that dark time.”