

Knowing I would be attending Camp Erin and its Parent/Caregiver retreat at the end of August, I figured I would write about and share my experience with all of you. On the last night, a candlelight ceremony took place, with the kids on one side of the lake and the parents and caregivers on the other. The nights are so dark, it's hard to see what's directly in front of you, but it's that darkness that makes the candles on the other side appear so much brighter.

About an hour before the ceremony started, the parents and caregivers were asked to write a few words: a feeling they were having, a thought in their head, a sentiment about their loved one or their experience at the retreat- really, anything they wanted to share. The plan was to take each person's words and put them together to create a poem which would be read on the waterfront before the ceremony began.

After the ceremony, as I was getting ready for bed that night, I realized it wasn't my experience that should be shared; it's the parents and caregivers whose voices deserve to be heard. Thank you to each and every one of you for sharing yourself and your words, not only with each other, but with our entire COPE community.



*I feel alone but it turns out I am not.
Death has you think about your own life.
Messy, bumpy, overwhelming ride, but a rainbow awaits as we adapt.
While part of our dash, one day we will rehash,
That love and faith pulled us through.
You say a lot without a voice,
What would it have been with God's choice?
Your eyes express love,
With fingers touching faces without gloves,
But expressing that love.
A song to life for you, a blessing for us.
Thank you, it's a song with a chorus.
The price of a memory is the memory of the sorrow it brings.
Thank you to our lost loved ones,
For being treasures worthy of missing and remembering.
Thank you for being a part of our world.*

*You are loved and missed every day and will forever live on in our hearts.
We will meet again soon and eat together at the table.
Life is a challenge,
Take the bull by the horns and run with it.
This I will remember when the rest of life is through,
The finest thing I've ever done is simply loving you.
This experience is a masterpiece for me.
The loss is devastating but the support and healing we have shared will last forever.
Grief is a journey which I am not on alone.
Comforting.
Relief.
Everything will be ok.*

This picture is the view from the parents and caregivers side of the lake across to the other side during the candlelight ceremony. The sky was incredible. I thought about how that same sky that sits above me every night, and in that moment, I remembered that even though I can't always see the stars, they are always there waiting to be seen.