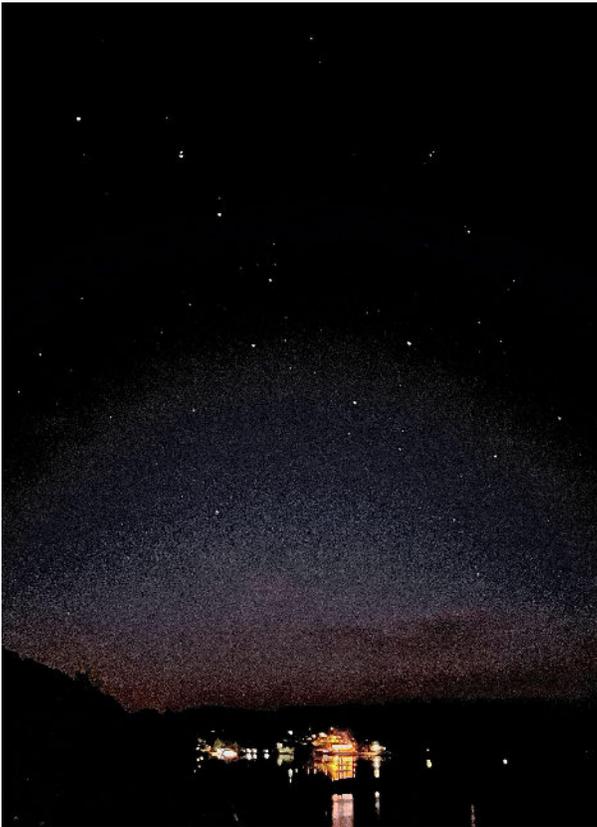


Last weekend, I had the privilege of experiencing Camp Erin's Parent/Caregiver retreat. On the last night of the retreat, with the kids and their parents/caregivers on opposite sides of the lake, a candlelight ceremony was held to honor and remember the loved ones they lost. It's too dark for us to see the kids, or for the kids to see us, but we can see each other's candles...we can see each other's light.

About an hour before the ceremony, the parents and caregivers were asked to write down a few words: a feeling, a thought, a sentiment about their loved one, or maybe their experience at the retreat. We would take all of the individual messages and turn them into a poem. It's hard to take so many different pieces and manage to create something new...something that makes sense.

Loss forces us to do that. We are made up of so many different pieces and when we lose someone, our pieces will look and feel differently, but they're still ours. It is really difficult to put our pieces together- in a new way, and in a way that makes some kind of sense to us, but I think we're all doing just that every day.

To all of the parents and caregivers who attended this year's retreat, thank you for giving a piece of yourselves to each other and for sharing what you created with the COPE community.



*Have a little faith.
The depth of a mother's love is immeasurable,
her grief knows no bounds.
What is grief if not love persevering?
Love doesn't die, people do.
So, when all that's left of me is love, give me away.
I got you babe, you live in my heart.
You can now fly, let your soul rest, baby girl.
I got the six forever, and I love you more eternally.
You light up my life.
Your legacy will live on, always loved, forever missed,
our favorite hero. We miss you.
You build me up buttercup,
your thoughtfulness gives me the strength to carry on.
We love you past infinity!
Throw the frisbee to Phoenix for us one more time.
It was too early, just one more moment together.
Angel, we miss you and can't wait to see you again,
my love for you will be with me always.
There are things I remember and things I forget,
And though I'll never forget your face,
sometimes I can't remember my name.
Have a little faith.
TNT forever, forever yours, faithfully.
I cannot control the wind, but I can adjust my sail.
I will sail on!
I am strong,
I am brave,
I am a superhero.*

This picture is the view from the parents and caregivers side of the lake across to the other side after the candle ceremony. Long after everyone had left the lakefront, and people could no longer see the candles from where they were, the candles and their light were still shining. So maybe it's true...that just because we can't see something, doesn't mean it isn't there.