‘Dancing Among Shadows’

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Poem written with audience participation
at 2016 Child Protection Alternative Dispute Resolution Symposium

When we see through the eyes of a child,
we can’t help but notice what’s right in front of us,
the awe in simple things,
a special glint of sunshine,
a subtle change in the clouds,
the beauty of a butterfly,
the way the rain falls down
but still smells like opportunity.

When we see through the eyes of a child,
construction zones cease to be annoyances,
they become wondrous displays of ingenuity, cooperation, and patience,
the constraints of the world disappear
and there is beauty in the building,
we blink away any looks of doubt
and trust ourselves to create our own path,
because why else would we be here
if not to have a hand in drawing our own map.

When we listen through the ears of a child,
we hear every single word, both spoken and unsaid,
we don’t want to be protected from the truth
if it means our story becomes limited,
we’re not afraid of the details
because we’re the ones who are living it,
we realize that there is no coincidence
that the letters spelling hear
are in both our ears and our heart.

When we feel through the heart of a child,
we worry about those who worry about us,
a circle of care not defined by age,
we trust that bad moments, bad feelings,
bad experiences, bad days
do not define us as unable
to start at any time on a new page,
we want someone in our corner
but still the space to demonstrate
we are intelligent and unique.

When we speak with the voice of a child,
we may not know all the words
for what has hurt us,
but we know that we are more
than whatever has happened,
we compliment without borders
and love without boundaries,
we throw jokes in the face of our sorrows
and bravely dance among our shadows,
we are confident that not knowing everything
doesn’t mean we don’t know anything,
and we continue to ask why,
we realize that one mouth is powerful in asking questions that are burning
but two ears are the best when it comes to real learning.

When we reach with the arms of a child,
we hug with our whole bodies,
we can love across the expanse of separation,
can see beyond the stress of our family matters
because our family matters
more than any problem that has grown
like a weed among the garden of our home,
we wrap hands around those who feel
they stick out like sore thumbs,
we know we are the ones with the responsibility
to transform pain into hope,
we know everyone’s picture of happiness
can’t be painted with the same brush,
that the things we forget can happen again
so we must continue to learn, and remember,
get down to a new level of understanding,
that the root of our strength to create change,
is inviting both big and little hands in.