

The death of a loved one—whether it happens suddenly or after a long illness—is difficult for anyone to process and work through. Children, though, often lack the tools to cope with a loss, especially if they are dealing with it for the first time.

Illinois Valley Community Hospital in Peru has taken on this sensitive topic to help guide children through loss during a My Treasure Chest Workshop run by Illinois Valley Hospice, a division of the hospital. The workshop gives children ages 6-14 the opportunity to preserve memories of loved ones who have recently passed away by creating their own unique treasure chests of keepsakes that recall happy memories.

“We want children to know they have the right to their own unique feelings, and a right to talk about these feelings” Lisa Casford, the workshop’s director and a spiritual counselor at Illinois Valley Hospice.

The event also includes other activities to help children cope with grief, including listening to stories, singing songs and remembering their loved one through writing. Hospice staff and volunteers lead the activities, and there is no fee to participate. All materials and lunch are provided. Three local children attended the workshop in 2017.

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