Russell and Delores Esela were the type of aunt and uncle that kids love to have around. A pocketful of candy to dole out, an occasional dollar or two for the youngsters nearby and lots of attention available for their nieces and nephews.

“They were both wonderful people,” said great nephew Chad Lucas. “They were fun to be around.”

The Eselas did not have any children of their own but were a constant presence in the lives of their nieces and nephews. That presence often included a handout of starlight mints from the stash Russell kept on hand. Their generous nature will forever be part of their legacy, as a portion of Russell’s estate planning was the establishment of the Delores (Lucas) Esela Scholarship Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. The Fund will benefit freshman students attending Sacred Heart Griffin High School in Springfield.

“He wanted to make sure she was remembered,” Lucas said. “He thought the best way to do that was with a scholarship.”
Delores passed away in 2006. Russell passed away in late 2014. Russell worked with Lucas to make sure the Fund would be established through his estate. Delores attended Sacred Heart Academy during the 1930s. She was a boarder at the school, as her family lived in the Morrisonville area. Because of that history, the scholarship – while available for any student attending Sacred Heart Griffin – will favor those attending the school from communities outside Springfield.

“The preference given to students that don’t reside in Springfield is a tribute to her story,” Lucas said.

Lucas was familiar with the work of the Community Foundation and led Russell to establish the fund.

“I know the great work the Community Foundation does and its benefits to the community,” Lucas said. “I suggested it would be a good place for him to create a fund so they could help administer the scholarship.”