Evelyn Brandt Thomas believes in preserving the past and encouraging the future. In order to help her achieve those goals, Thomas has created the **Evelyn Brandt Thomas Fund** through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. The Fund easily enables Thomas to meet the needs of her areas of interest in a flexible timeframe. “It gives me time to think about it and when opportunities come up, it allows me to take care of it right then,” said Thomas, who was a co-founder of Brandt Consolidated.

The fund will focus on the upkeep and improvements to the **Thomas Garden of Hope** area of the Simmons Cancer Institute, an area that showcases Thomas’ belief in preserving the past for a future audience. The garden was constructed in memory of Thomas’ late husband, Gordon Thomas. It was inspired by a family farm in Mt. Sterling called **Rocky Branch**. The **Garden of Hope** features an array of native prairie plants and rocks and geodes found on the fifth generation family farm. “That’s my main project,” Thomas said. “It requires maintenance year to year.”

The fund may also support other interests of Thomas, such as the preservation of Clayville Historical Site near Pleasant Plains. Education is another major area of interest for Thomas. She plans to use this fund to help increase the scholarship value for the ten scholarship awards she has already established for college students studying agriculture. Currently, she funds scholarships at the University of Illinois, Lincoln Land Community College, University of Illinois Springfield and Brown County High School. “I will extend the scholarships I have,” Thomas said.

Philanthropy has long been part of her activities. She has been active in Home Extension offices, Conservation Club of Pleasant Plains, Zion Lutheran Church, Women for Women and other philanthropic efforts. “I’ve always been involved in the community,” Thomas said. “It’s important to be involved.” Thomas founded Brandt Consolidated with her brother Glen in 1953. The company celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2013 and has grown from a small business in Pleasant Plains into an international leader in specialized agricultural projects. While the size of the company has grown, the spirit of helping maintain the land to support agriculture efforts remains its core.

“We encourage people to be good stewards of the soil,” Thomas said. “They aren’t making any more land. It’s very important to maintain the land. ... Life has been good to us. It feels good to help out others.”