Illinois Women in Leadership has a long history of helping young women pursuing collegiate dreams. To help maintain the tradition, IWIL recently established the Illinois Women in Leadership Scholarship Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“One of the philosophies of the Illinois Women in Leadership is to support and encourage leadership of young women,” IWIL Immediate Past President Val Yazell said. “We want to give back to the community and support young women coming into the work place. It’s very important to support young women in leadership. We feel very strongly about that.”

The Fund will provide $1,000 scholarships to three high school senior girls from Sangamon County, who are chosen through an application and interview process. IWIL uses an eight to 10 person committee to choose the finalists who are then interviewed by three to four IWIL representatives. The group often maintains contact with past scholarship recipients which helps inspire IWIL to continue the program.

“It’s very moving to watch some of these young women and what they end up doing,” Yazell said.

In an effort to expand its scholarship program to more applicants, IWIL introduced the Chrysalis Scholarship for Women in 2007. The scholarship provides $1,000 to a woman who has been out of high school for a few years and is returning to college to pursue an undergraduate degree.

“We want to support women who for whatever reason couldn't go straight to college from high school,” Yazell said.

The establishment of the fund through the Community Foundation continues a long history of giving by Illinois Women in Leadership. The group has been awarding the scholarships more than 20 years, the last three as IWIL and the previous scholarships as Women in Management.

IWIL funds the scholarship through an auction and holiday social event in December. The group consists of close to 200 members and has been dedicated to the scholarship program.

“We feel very strongly about supporting these young women,” Yazell said.