Mary White Maddux remembers her mother speaking about the beginning of her career as a teacher and a newlywed.

"Mother talked about having two dresses – one she wore while the other was being washed," Mary said. "My parents were very poor, but they worked hard for their family and were wonderful people."

Ada and Joseph White, local to the Ashland and Virginia communities, served their community as a teacher and firefighter, respectively, and when they passed away, the couple's family and friends established funds to carry on their memory and their life's work. In 2016, the two funds were transferred to the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln to become the Ada McCombs-White Memorial Teacher Scholarship Fund and the Joseph William White Fireman's Endowment Fund.

"Mother started teaching in the 1940s, and she worked and worked and finally got her degree in 1959 from MacMurray College. She loved children and sharing her knowledge, so we thought giving scholarships would honor her memory," Mary said. "My mother was from Ashland and lived there all her life until she married, so we thought it would be nice to go to a student at A-C Central High School who is going into education. We set it up with the Community Foundation so it would always be in effect and we could build on it."

Mary's father, Joseph, served as a volunteer fireman in Virginia for 40 years.

"He was really involved, always helped out and never missed meetings," she recalled. "One time, he didn't have a vehicle at home and the fire bell rang, so he just ran all the way into town!"

The Fireman's Endowment Fund now gives funding to the fire department in Virginia, and each year, a new purpose is chosen for the gift. The community rallied to help raise money for the fund, which now stands at around $20,000.
“One year, they bought new masks to protect against smoke. So his memory is being carried on in that way,” Mary said.

Mary said she is reassured that her parents’ memories will be honored through the newly-established funds with the Community Foundation.

“I feel so satisfied when the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln expanded into other communities, not just Sangamon County,” she said. “They take care of everything and will do so for the coming future. They understand everything and will honor it and our purpose.”

The Virginia Fire Department will continue to receive funding through the Joseph William White Fireman’s Endowment Fund, and the Ada McCombs-White Memorial Teacher Scholarship Fund will provide a scholarship each year to a graduating A-C Central High School senior pursuing education, honoring the lives and the service of the Whites.

“Our goal and our hope is to continue to provide a scholarship for those students and continue to support the firemen in Virginia or a similar area they associate with,” Mary said. “We simply want to continue to give a little extra for the firemen, and we hope the scholarship will boost the teaching profession that Mother thought so much of. My parents were community-minded, Christian people; this is a continuation of their values and the time they gave to the community.”