Looking for Lincoln ends search for Fund home

A search that never ends.

That’s the goal for the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition and its’ Looking for Lincoln efforts. The Coalition works with communities in 42 counties across the state designated as the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. The area contains a variety of attractions related to former President Abraham Lincoln.

As part of solidifying funding to help the Looking for Lincoln communities, the Coalition recently established the Looking for Lincoln Fund with the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“Our goal is to look to the longtime sustainability of the organization so we can further the work with communities and partners and presentations and keep telling with integrity the life and times of Abraham Lincoln.” Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition Executive Director Sarah Watson said.

The Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area was confirmed via an act of Congress and signed by the President in 2008. It designates the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition as manager of the 42 county area, and the Coalition receives limited federal funding. However, the legislation only runs through 2023. If the legislation isn’t renewed, the Fund’s establishment hopefully will enable the Coalition to continue its work after the legislation expires.

“We are a hub for communities that have Lincoln sites,” said Watson, who is one of seven members on the Coalition Board. “We would like to know we can keep telling the Lincoln story in perpetuity.”

The story of Lincoln is told in 42 counties across the state. Information on the sites can be found at www.discoverlincoln.org. The communities tell a variety of stories ranging from the Lincoln-Douglas debates to his road to the Presidency. Locally, the sites include the Presidential Library, Lincoln’s Tomb, New Salem Park and the Long Nine Museum in Athens among other attractions.
Helping tell those stories in all 42 counties is the Coalition's only goal. It focuses on helping communities educate guests, envisioning new ways to tell the story and attract tourist groups looking for Lincoln information to local communities that otherwise wouldn’t receive attention.

"By themselves they can’t leverage resources to enhance the sites they have. The growth from this Fund will allow us to leverage greater resources that we can share with all the sites," Watson said. "This can help them attract tourism and help the bottom line of the communities."

The Coalition is confident it has found a good home for the Fund with the Community Foundation.

"There is a great deal of confidence in the Community Foundation," Watson said.

For more information on establishing a fund contact the Community Foundation at 217/789-4431.