It’s about education and finances for M.E.R.C.Y.

In an attempt to provide the former and increase the latter, M.E.R.C.Y. has recently established the M.E.R.C.Y. Communities Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“We want an opportunity to educate people so that more financial resources might come in as a result of that,” M.E.R.C.Y. Executive Director Mary Stone said. “Raising funds for not-for-profit is always a challenge. We are relatively new and we feel we have a large educational need. We feel this provides a great opportunity to provide education on the homelessness issue. We’re excited about the possibilities.”

M.E.R.C.Y., which stands for Mentors Empowerment and Resources for Change in Young Families, provides transitional and permanent housing for single-parent families. The focus is on homeless families with female head of households. It currently operates 10 units in a transitional living program and 10 units in a permanent living program. The programs serve local families and receive referrals for assistance from other local programs. It is currently at its capacity of 20 families.

“The fund will be used to set up transitional living and permanent support homes for homeless families with children,” Stone said. “It will help us continue to nurture our programs. The needs far surpass affordable housing and services for female head of households.”

The fund was established by a donor to serve as a catalyst for future donors. It also serves as a step forward in the program’s strategic plan, continuing the program’s long-range thinking in the same manner that it works with its clients. The M.E.R.C.Y. method is to stay with families for the long-term. Families may reside in the transitional housing program for up to two years. The average stay is 17 months.

“Our program is designed to make systemic changes for families so they are not reliant on government services,” Stone said. “We have a desire to keep families from cycling in and out of homelessness.”

The organization consists of six full-time employees and five part-time employees. The transitional housing units are staffed 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. M.E.R.C.Y. also operates the M.E.R.C.Y. House Furniture Store located at 1615 Wabash Avenue.