Larry Johnson has always enjoyed scholarship receptions. The excitement of helping students achieve dreams is uplifting. But the reception now means more than ever as Johnson meets each recipient of the Margaret Johnson Special Education Scholarship Fund.

“It’s very exciting. Some of the most exciting experiences are going to scholarship receptions where kids get their scholarships and they get to meet the families or funders of the scholarships,” Johnson said. “It’s a fun process to see young kids all excited and life in front of them.”

Larry Johnson and family established the fund in honor of his late mother. The fund will provide a scholarship for one student each year attending college to major in special education. Shannon Johnson, Larry’s wife, and daughter Kimberly Johnson are special education teachers in District 186. The combination of helping a student receive an education and for that education to be in the special education field was lockstep with how the family wanted to honor Margaret Johnson.

“She especially enjoyed doing things for the kids,” Johnson said. “(Special education) held a very special place in her heart. … My mom was all about education. It was very important.”

Margaret Johnson passed in 2004. The family believes the scholarship provides another conduit for her legacy. “When she passed away, this was to create something that could live on,” Johnson said. “It’s something we talked about as a family. We knew we wanted to do something to remember her, help kids out and make it easier for them to go to school.”

Johnson, who was a CPA before becoming the director of a local nonprofit, has talked with many clients about establishing scholarship funds as part of estate planning. He is a strong believer in the process and the benefits these funds provide.

“It’s something that helps people in a time when they are framing their lives,” Johnson said. “It’s so easy and it’s a great way to help people. … It’s an action I highly recommend.”