Mary Lynn Bryan believes in community foundations. She has watched them benefit communities for generations and has been active for decades in the Fayetteville, N.C. community foundation where she resides.

So when she and her brother, John McCree, decided to honor their late parents, Evelyn and Walter McCree, Bryan knew the perfect avenue. As a result, the McCree Family Fund was established through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. Evelyn and Walter McCree lived for several decades in Springfield before passing away. John McCree still resides in Springfield.

“At some point we will be gone from the community, and this is a way to keep something in the community,” Bryan said. “You never forget your roots and people you grew up with and friends you have there. My experience and my brother’s experience growing up in Springfield were very positive. It was a natural thing to do... this is a nice way to remember Mom and Dad.”

Bryan became familiar with community foundations after moving to Fayetteville in 1981. She served on the board of the local community foundation, watching its assets grow from an original $500,000 donation to $60 million in assets. “I was very glad to see Springfield had a community foundation because I’ve seen benefits of it here,” Bryan said. “Springfield and the surrounding communities very much benefit from it.” The flexibility community foundations allow also was a major draw. The McCree Family Fund is a field of interest fund focusing on improving local infrastructure and supporting sports activities. The choices were chosen from the siblings’ connection to Springfield.

John McCree played multiple sports at Springfield High School. Mary was on the cheerleading squad. “Mother and Father loved sports. They went to every game,” Bryan said. “There are a lot of ways you can be supportive of sports, whether it’s helping build a field or helping kids go somewhere to learn a sport.”

The decision to also focus on infrastructure developed from Walter’s profession as an engineer and the experience Mary has had watching Fayetteville struggle to match the infrastructure of larger towns in North Carolina. “Most people don’t think about how important infrastructure is in a community. When you don’t have it, and you need it, it becomes very important,” Bryan said.

With the areas selected, the siblings have left exact distribution of funds to the Community Foundation board. It’s a decision born out of Bryan’s years serving on a foundation board. “I have great faith in boards,” Bryan said. “I do want them to have flexibility. I have full faith in the board of the Community Foundation.”