Robert and Marilyn Uteg didn’t seek out attention during their lives. They also didn’t shirk away from helping others. That giving mindset will long be their legacy through a gift from their estate that the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln has named the Robert and Marilyn Uteg Communityworks Fund.

“They were very civic minded,” said the Uteg’s niece, Laurel Engelmann, who was the executor of the couple’s estate. “They were very generous, good-hearted people.”

The Communityworks Fund focuses on three major areas:
- Early childhood development;
- Land use and protection; and,
- Workforce development.

“The Utegs provided a generous gift that will help address the long-term needs in our community,” Community Foundation President and CEO John Stremsterfer said. “Their philanthropic leadership in our community will be remembered as we strive to continue to make this an even better place to live.”

The couple was active in a variety of issue areas, but often focused on education and creating opportunities for the less fortunate. Among their priorities were the University of Illinois Springfield, Lutheran High School and Big Brothers Big Sisters. The Community Foundation was one of 29 organizations that received gifts from their estate, totaling 80-90 percent of their total estate worth according to Engelmann.
“They did not seek out the limelight,” Engelmann said. “They had been making charitable gifts for many, many years. This was definitely a way of life for them.”

That way of life included Robert Uteg serving as a mentor for several area youth through years working with Big Brothers Big Sisters. In his final years, one of the “little brothers” Uteg assisted helped care for him.

“It was a circle of giving,” Engelmann said.

The Utegs, who married when both were in their forties, planned their estate several years ago and chose to focus on how their resources could best be leveraged to benefit the community. After meeting with the Community Foundation, many years ago, the Utegs expressed an interest in supporting the Communityworks Fund.

“The thoughtful process the Utegs took in their estate planning is to be admired,” Stremsterfer said. “They focused on areas of interest and how to best capitalize the gift to the fullest extent. Their legacy will be one of giving in an impactful way. They were extremely generous people, and our community is forever thankful to them.”