Roland Machinery Scholarship

**Roland Family Establishes Two Funds**

The Roland family is striving to intertwine the present with the future. The path toward that intermingling is the creation of the Roland Machinery Scholarship Fund and the Roland Family Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

Roland Machinery, under the direction of Ray Roland and his children Rachel Pennell and Matt Roland, started the Roland Machinery Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships to Central Illinois students seeking an education in vocational studies.

“We were interested in funding scholarships to get people going into vocational training,” Pennell said. “Our focus is on the construction industry.”

Roland Machinery, founded in 1958, provides heavy equipment operators with machines, support and services out of 16 branch offices across five states. The company has provided a living for three generations of family members. That ability to support families is one reason the company wants to introduce a new generation of students to the benefits of vocational work.

“I guarantee you a person going to work in our industry can make a pretty good darn living,” Ray Roland said. “Our industry can provide a good living for anybody.”

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The company currently has a relationship with a handful of vocational education programs across the country. Those relationships will continue as the scholarship program begins. Scholarship winners can renew their scholarships if they continue on the vocational study path. That relationship could possibly continue past graduation as the company has employment opportunities.

“We wanted to expose the vocational career path,” Pennell said. “If any kids are thinking they want to be a mechanic or work on machines or be a laborer, we wanted to provide a scholarship. If we can help get students in the career path, we could be involved with employment opportunities.”

Earl Roland, the company founder, was a big believer in providing educational opportunities to future generations.

“He was very dedicated to higher education. He would be very supportive of this scholarship,” Pennell said.

The Roland Family has also established the Roland Family Fund, a donor-advised fund, which will enable the family to match up with a wide variety of needs. The family’s philanthropic efforts have been varied in the past, and the creation of this Fund could provide a clearer approach.

“We could be more focused if we do it through the Community Foundation,” Roland said. “The Community Foundation is a wonderful thing. We are going to learn about things. We are excited about it.”

The family became familiar with the Community Foundation through Board Member Bruce Thompson and Rachel Pennell’s work on the Student of the Year award overseen by the organization.

“I’ve been impressed with the Community Foundation,” Pennell said. “There are many thriving not-for-profits in the community, and we are interested in being part of it.”