Robert E. von Behren spent his life building things. His memory will help build even more things in the youth of our community.

The Springfield Area Home Builders Association recently established the SAHBA Robert E. von Behren Memorial Scholarship Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. The fund will provide an annual scholarship to a local student who is interested in the building trades or related occupation.

“We’re thrilled,” said Donna Caton, one of von Behren’s six children. “We feel very honored. He would have been humbled by it. He would have been honored and humbled.”

Discussion of the scholarship initiated in the spring of 2005, following von Behren’s death at the age of 87 in December 2004. Von Behren was a fixture among Springfield builders. He founded RE von Behren and Sons Builders and helped establish the Springfield Area Home Builders Association, serving as president for three terms. He was devoted to his craft and worked hard to perfect his skills.

“He was a very dedicated person. When he started something, he gave everything. He got it right,” Caton said. “The quality of his building is what people talk about. They realize he was a real craftsman.”

It was important to the family for the fund to be directed toward students interested in the building trades profession. Von Behren taught classes on building trades and cement finishing through local union training programs.

“There are a lot of scholarships for kids to go to college, but not everyone is college material. We need to recognize the importance of the trade careers,” Caton said. “I think it’s a major opportunity for people choosing to go into a trade and not college. It could be a tremendous support.”

The scholarship recipient will be selected from local graduating seniors who are interested in pursuing a career in the construction or building industry.