Bill and Mary Schnirring are well known in the Springfield community for their philanthropy. The Schnirrings taught their daughters, Carolyn Dungan and Kathy Germeraad, the importance of giving back to their community. For more than 35 years, Carolyn and Dan Dungan and Kathy and Randy Germeraad have been very active in the Springfield community. They have all served on many civic boards and spent countless hours volunteering for community needs. They have also given financially to causes in which they believe strongly.

All three families have established donor-advised funds at the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. Their family company, Springfield Electric Supply Company, also has a fund established for larger corporate gifts. The families decided to work with the Community Foundation to establish funds rather than starting a private foundation for giving. They felt that it was easier to have the Community Foundation manage their funds while allowing them more flexibility in their giving. The Community Foundation helped them avoid additional legal and administrative burdens that come with operating a private foundation.

Additionally, as Kathy Germeraad stated, “The Community Foundation provides more privacy for the donors. A private foundation is required to file a separate tax return. This is then public information, which means anyone has access to how much you are giving and to whom. You can be more discreet about your giving through the Community Foundation.”

Separate funds allow each family to focus on interests specific to them. For the Dungan family, it is the arts. Carolyn and Dan’s son and daughter, Colin and Caitlin, were very involved with art and music, respectively, throughout school.

“I’m interested in expanding the arts in the community,” Carolyn Dungan said. “It’s always one of the first things that is cut in schools. Not every student is great at math and science, English or history. We think the arts help a student become a well-rounded individual, helping our community thrive.”
For the Germeraads, the focus will return to their teaching roots with educational needs motivating their giving. “My husband and I focus on education,” Kathy Germeraad explained. “Education is where our hearts are. We feel that a strong educational system is essential in making the community stronger and preparing our children for the future. Having excellent public schools is a factor in attracting new people to Springfield. A strong educational system may also provide an incentive for people to remain in the community.”

Mary and Bill Schnirring use their fund to focus more on assisting those in poverty. All three families have participated in the Community Grants Program administered through the Community Foundation. Each year, grant requests from charities are sent to donors with donor-advised funds interested in being exposed to new funding opportunities. This program enables multiple funds to combine resources to provide for a project that might be larger than one fund can support. This is where the Dungan and Germeraad children were first introduced to giving from their families’ funds.

When the Community Grant process begins, Carolyn and Kathy circulate the list of grant requests to their children, Caitlin and Colin Dungan, Carrie Germeraad, and Scott and Colleen, and Ryan Germeraad. Each family decides as a group which grants to fund for that year. “It’s a great way for all of us to learn about the needs of the community and it is always fun to see what the kids’ interests are. Each year the needs change and so do the grants funded.” Carolyn Dungan said.

Bill and Mary Schnirring surprised their grandchildren at the end of 2013 by establishing a donor-advised fund for each of them. They now have the opportunity to personalize their giving. Caitlin Dungan and Scott Germeraad and his wife, Colleen, live in the Springfield area. Carrie Germeraad and her cousin, Colin Dungan, live in Chicago. Although they are still interested in the needs in Springfield, they look forward to having the flexibility to donate to causes that interest them in Chicago. Having a donor-advised fund enables you to make donations anywhere, not just in the Springfield area. Carrie remarked how excited she is to have the opportunity to address needs that interest her in Chicago. Colin thinks they can make an impact in each of their communities, Chicago, Springfield, and Rochester. Colin commented, “Having our individual fund is a great way for all of us to pursue our diverse interests and donate to causes we want to support. It is continuing the legacy of giving our parents and grandparents started.”

This next generation of philanthropists realizes that monetary donations aren’t the only way to give back to their communities. “Our family is extremely blessed,” said Scott Germeraad, “and this
community has been very good to our family. It's only right to give back and help the community that has given us so much in return. Our parents and grandparents have been great role models. They have taught us that it takes more than just donating money when being supportive. Donating your time and effort is also extremely important in giving back to the community."

Caitlin Dungan expanded upon that theme. She explained, "Giving back is an essential part to having a healthy community. I view ‘giving’ not just in monetary terms, but also in time. Donating money to important causes, funds and organizations is vital to their longevity and mission and giving one’s time can only enhance that donation and truly affect organizations and people in need."

These young philanthropists have acted upon their views. The five cousins have donated their time to Habitat for Humanity, the "Compass Program" through the Family Service Center, the United Way, the Junior League, The Hope School "Style of Hope", the Springfield Art Association, and the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. Scott and Colleen Germeraad have also become active in the Community Foundation’s Young Philanthropists group. Colleen Germeraad is a member of the Foundation’s Women for Women group that supports causes helping women and children.

It seems evident that the idea of philanthropy has truly been embraced by this younger generation. Caitlin commented, "One of my favorite quotes comes from St. Francis of Assisi. He said, ‘For it is in giving that we receive.’" This simple statement is so powerful and absolutely true. Through giving, one can receive so much and be able to have an impact on people’s lives and the chance to make a difference in any community.