Researching now for the future

Unlike many school assignments, this test guarantees a happy ending for deserving students.

Deb and Barry Shultz wanted to test the waters on future philanthropic decisions, so the couple recently established a pair of charitable funds through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln as part of their estate planning decision-making process.

“We were looking for a way to test the experience,” Deb Shultz said. “We want to do two things: give back to the community, and basically do investigative research in our lifetime that will shape how we decide to handle our estate plans.”

The two funds established by the Shultz family are the Girls on the Run of Central Illinois Founder’s Scholarship Fund and the Shultz Family Fund.

The Girls on the Run of Central Illinois Founder’s Scholarship Fund will provide educational scholarships for alumni of the Girls on the Run program. The Fund is a continuation of Shultz’s passion for the Girls on the Run program. She founded the local Girls on the Run program ten years ago while on leave from her job at IBM. She oversaw it for the first seven years of existence and currently serves on its Board of Directors.

What began with an inaugural group of 13 girls now annually reaches almost 1,200 participants in nine counties. The program is a developmentally focused youth sports program that inspires girls in grades 3-8 to be joyful, healthy and confident while incorporating running games into the program curriculum. It combines emotional and physical training for girls, culminating in a 5K celebration event held at the end of each program season.
“It’s a really different program than others. It combines all the aspects of being a girl,” Shultz said. “It creates a safe space where they can learn about themselves. It teaches them about physical health and emotional health. And it’s fun.”

The $1,000 scholarships will be awarded on a one-time basis to one past program participant each year. As running the 5K at the end of each year shows program participants the value of setting and reaching goals, the awarding of a scholarship to those alumni that displayed the characteristics taught by the program throughout their school years is another tangible goal the girls can reach.

“It’s a way to recognize students who have done well and deserve it,” Shultz said.

The Family Fund will have a broader focus. Discovering the different avenues the Fund may travel is part of the allure of working with the Community Foundation, which can be used as an information portal for needs in the area.

“We know there are a lot of needs in the community. We are trying to educate ourselves and have a better understanding of how the money can be used,” Shultz said. “We want to be involved in discovering why people support the organizations they support.”

The Funds also allow Shultz to continue to teach about philanthropy and provide a role model for the couple’s daughter Erin, who is a junior at the University of Georgia.

“You don’t have to be wealthy to start (funds),” Shultz said. “We are trying to encourage this behavior in our daughter. One way to do that is to model the behavior.”

For more information about donor-advised funds, contact the Community Foundation at 217/789-4431.