The Spanish American Club wanted to leave its legacy in good hands. It found the place in the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

The Club has entrusted the Community Foundation with managing its funds through the creation of two funds, the Spanish American Cultural Center Fund and the Spanish American Cultural Center Scholarship Fund. The organization needed a place to continue to manage its assets because it had decided to disband. Many of its leaders were no longer able to dedicate the amount of time needed to manage the organization.

“The foundation is set up ideally for the situation we had,” said Nelson Morales, a long-time club member who recently moved to Florida. “We have been very pleased. We did a lot of research on the foundation. A lot of the people on the board of directors, we knew them. We know it will be in good hands.”

The club raised money for the past 25 years at a variety of events including food sales at the Ethnic Festival and Lincoln Fest. The community support of the organization at its events is what influenced it to keep the charitable gifts local.

“We thought returning (the money) to the community was the right way,” German Roncancio said. “We wanted to go against the thought that immigrants don’t bring anything back to the community. Most people forget that their grandparents and great grandparents were immigrants. … Immigrants can help the community.”

The organization’s long-time goal had been to build a Spanish American Cultural Center in Springfield. However, as time passed that goal no longer was feasible and the board of directors decided to change goals.

“We decided the money would be better invested in scholarships and charitable organizations,” Morales said.

The scholarship fund will provide for six scholarships per year for Latino students attending college. Students from Sangamon and surrounding counties will be eligible for the scholarships.

“The only way to help people is through education,” Roncancio said. “If you’re able to help someone get an education, that is quite a bit.”

The Cultural Center Fund will provide grants to eight local programs, Holy Family Food Pantry, St. John’s Breadline, Contact Ministries, Helping Hands of Springfield, Friend-in-Deed, Sojourn Shelter and Services, Inc., Ronald McDonald House and Immigration Project of Mid-Illinois.