Susan Conner’s career in the field of special education was a model of exemplary dedication to her students, family and friends.

When Suzi was killed in an auto accident in 1994, those who knew her came together to honor her work as a behavioral needs specialist with the Springfield Area Special Education District (SASED). They created an award in her name, choosing a recipient from the SASED community annually to be recognized with the $200 gift called the Susan G. Conner Excellence Award.

Several years ago, however, the award’s committee of six individuals realized the need for long-term administrative oversight and investment structure to carry on the award.

“We had a brainstorming session and were concerned about who would run this when we’re gone because there wasn’t any provision for ongoing effort,” said David Conner, who was Suzi’s husband and has served on the award committee since inception.

The Susan G. Conner Special Education Scholarship was established at the Community Foundation in 2012.

While at first the award in Suzi’s memory was given to an employee of SASED, the new scholarship fund will now benefit a student who will be studying special education in college and is a graduate from one of the school districts served by SASED, including A-C Central, Athens, Auburn, Ball-Chatham, Greenview, New Berlin, North Mac, Pawnee, Pleasant Plain, PORTA, Riverton, Rochester, Tri-City, Virginia or Williamsville. District 186 students may also be included if they have a parent who is employed by SASED.

“When you initially set something like this up (the original excellence award), you don’t really look down the road. No one is thinking about how the torch will get passed,” Conner said. “The Foundation provides that for us now. It provides a way for charitable giving to continue on beyond the lifespan of any individual.”

The fund has reached its initial goal to be able to provide one $500 scholarship each year, and Conner hopes that someday, it may grow into a scholarship with a larger amount or even multiple scholarships, carrying on Suzi’s legacy and love of special education for generations to come.

“By being with the Foundation, it assures perpetuity,” he said. “All of us are glad to see the memorial continue on.”
For more information on starting a scholarship, or how to contribute to the Susan G. Conner Special Education Scholarship, please contact the Community Foundation at 217.789.4431 or visit CFLL.org