Education can’t be taken away from those who achieve it. That was the lesson Sally K. Davis drilled into her daughter Deb Bandy. It was a lesson that took hold and blossomed.

Bandy is striving to pass along that lesson to others with the recent creation of The Sally Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln. She and her son Ryan Bandy will use the donor-advised fund to provide resources to low-income local students planning to pursue a college education.

“I want to do it, to give back, to honor my mom. She was always a huge believer in education,” Bandy said. “She always pushed me to get an education. She would always say if you had an education, nobody could take that away from you.”

Davis passed away at the age of 54. It has been 16 years since she died, but her mother’s determination has provided a lifetime role model for Bandy. Her determination helped push Bandy to become the first college graduate in her family. Davis’ adherence to needing an education was instrumental in helping Bandy complete college as she often cared for Bandy’s young child while she attended class and worked a full-time job.

“My mother was a big help to getting me through college,” Bandy said. “I couldn’t have done it without her. She was always there for us.”

Helping others achieve their education wasn’t all Davis did. After dropping out of high school to raise a family, she displayed her own determination by returning to earn her GED. Along with helping a student attending college, Bandy also plans to honor her mother by helping people achieve their GEDs.

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“I believe if you don’t at least have that, it is hard to participate in society in a meaningful way,” Bandy said.

The Fund’s focus on helping low- to middle-income students is a testimony to Bandy’s upbringing and her family’s work ethic to become financially secure.

“I wanted to do something to help people who are like our family,” Bandy said. “To those that much is given, much is expected. This is one of my tiny ways of helping those that are unfortunate. Some people don’t have the opportunity some of us have gotten.”

Bandy’s brothers Brad and Rodney Davis both followed in her footsteps, attending and graduating from Millikin.

The Fund isn’t the first community involvement for Bandy, who has lived in Springfield since 1991. She has been involved in the Sojourn Shelter and Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters and various other community projects. The Fund’s establishment at the Community Foundation will let her continue to be involved in the community in a meaningful manner.

“It’s important because I believe in a strong sense of community,” Bandy said. “If everyone gives a little back to the community, it’s going to grow exponentially.”