It’s a memorial that will live on through generations.

In honor of the accomplishments of World War II veterans, the World War II Illinois Veterans Committee recently established the World War II Illinois Descendants Scholarship Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“This particular scholarship program will integrate into the community. They will have something reminding them of World War II and a simple reminder of the atrocities that can occur,” said John Carrigan, President of the World War II Illinois Veterans Committee. “They don’t have to drive by this memorial.”

The scholarship is available for descendants of World War II veterans throughout the state of Illinois. There will be two $2,000 scholarships awarded each year to high school seniors preparing to attend college. Students must also maintain a minimum 4.0 non-weighted grade point average. The veterans board worked almost two years to see the project come to fruition.

“We finally have it in reality. I think it’s great,” said 86-year-old Cecil Belton, a member of the board and a World War II veteran.

The Community Foundation will work with statewide organizations to help locate qualified students.

“We’re very excited that we’re doing a structured memorial for the community to see,” Carrigan said.

The scholarships will be given statewide because the seed money for the fund is the remaining money from collections across the state to build the World War II Memorial at Oak Ridge Cemetery. The scholarship fund will help remind the students and communities about the impact World War II has had on our culture.

“When I go out and speak at the schools and to the students, they don’t concentrate too much on that part of U.S. history,” Belton said. “This would be a great way to keep those memories about World War II.”

Belton is among several local World War II veterans that visit area schools to speak about the war. It was important to establish the Fund during a time when the veterans are able to participate in the program.

“We’re getting to the age where time is getting important,” Belton said. “I’m sure the scholarship program will pay off in the years to come.”

The board also hopes that the memorial will remind people about the sacrifices the individual soldiers made in World War II and always make in serving their country.

“These two simple words, “Thank You” are always on the venue of conversation with any soldier,” said Carrigan, whose father Maurice served in World War II and whose mother Therese was a civilian prisoner of war during the conflict.