David Richardson couldn’t say no to serving on the Girard High School Alumni Association. Shortly after turning an age with a round number – 40 – Richardson received a call asking if he would join the alumni association board to help bring in youthfulness.

The call came from then board president Gene Cushman, Girard class of ’41, whose vision and initiative was instrumental in the association being established in 1992. Thanks to generous donations from the Girard community and others, the first scholarship was awarded in 1993.

“I always jokingly say I couldn’t turn him down because he was the first person in a long time to refer to me as being young,” Richardson said.
Richardson, a ‘73 Girard High School graduate, wanted to give back to his community and the alumni association provided a rewarding avenue by granting scholarships to graduates of Girard, and then more recently, North Mac High School graduates residing in the former Girard school district.

After 25 years of granting scholarships, Richardson and the board received a wonderful surprise. Mary E. Dohm, a ‘32 Girard graduate and former elementary teacher at Girard, named the alumni association a beneficiary in her will, providing a larger gift than what they were used to. In memory of her brother George D. Dohm (Girard class of ’38), she established two scholarship endowments – one for a female graduate and the other for a male graduate.

The size of the gift gave the alumni association some pause. They wanted to make sure they made the most of the generosity.

“The board has members who are knowledgeable in the fields of finance and banking, but this was a big responsibility and we wanted to get it right,” Richardson said.

It just so happened that an association member, J.R. Earley, had been working with the Community Foundation to set up scholarships with COUNTRY Financial. After talking through different available options, the alumni association established the Girard High School Alumni Scholarship Fund.

“We began our search looking for the best type of vehicle in which to invest these additional funds, and what we found in the Community Foundation was so much more,” Richardson said.

“Through the Community Foundation, we are in essence partnering with a team of people who are knowledgeable in the area of endowments and whose purpose is to oversee the investing of such funds on an on-going basis.”

Not only would the alumni association still be able to manage the scholarship process – which has now granted more than $242,000 to recipients since 1993 – they appreciated the thoughtfulness and care in managing the funds.

“The Community Foundation’s belief in a conservative balanced approach to portfolio management aligns with the alumni association’s goal to earn a return on our investments,” Richardson said, “while minimizing the risk to ensure we continue to have the funds available to support our mission of providing the George D. Dohm scholarships.”

It’s provided Richardson and the alumni association board a chance to concentrate on their scholarship process and help their community while knowing the funds are handled responsibly.

“Serving on the board has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done,” Richardson said. “Getting to see the financial gifts of our membership and others impact the lives of these young men and women is truly amazing.”

For more information on how to donate to Girard Alumni Association Scholarship Fund, please contact the Community Foundation at 217.789.4431 or visit CFLL.org.