More than 60 years ago, Dr. and Mrs. Charles E. Jordan explored for a place to educate their daughter, Judith Ann, who had multiple disabilities.

When the search proved unsuccessful, the Jordans instead took action to create their own school – The Hope School – that would be able to help Judith Ann reach her full potential.

Back in 1957, it would have been hard to imagine what Hope has now become. Programs to educate, treat and care for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental disabilities have expanded beyond Springfield and the school it's so well known for.
Now with locations throughout Illinois and even across state lines into Missouri, Hope's programs include residential and clinical services, as well as job training through the Hope Vocational Academy.

That approach of creating an encompassing model to help children for years to come was part of the reason Hope explored creating a fund at the Community Foundation. The Hope Children with Disabilities Education Fund is a way to fulfill Hope's mission for generations, while preserving its longtime connection with Springfield.

“Hope is here for the long haul,” Hope President and Chief Executive Officer Clint Paul said. “We have been a presence in the Springfield community for over 60 years, and we plan to be here for many more years to come.

“Our mission will always be to serve children with disabilities because we have the expertise to ensure that they have a bright future. We endeavor to provide the very best education possible for children with developmental disabilities and we will continue to provide the leading edge, state of the art services that we are known for providing today. This fund is critical to help us continue our mission into the future.”

As Hope continues to evolve, the fund can help address new challenges and opportunities that arise through funding the latest technology to improve educational outcomes or from engaging in professional development training for professional staff.

That could include developing a program like one recently started at Hope, an early intensive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy program for preschoolers with autism. The goal is to have students graduate into a traditional kindergarten class with their peers, a goal Hope is seeing met more and more.

“At Hope, we consider our programs to be vital and life changing. In addition to the fundamental services we offer, there are many things that we also provide our children with that go above and beyond what our tuition or other funding sources cover, such as our technology and curriculum,” Paul said.

“These leading-edge services ensure that our children have the best possible chance at having a bright future.

“This fund helps us continue to provide education and services that our children deserve, and that ultimately changes their lives for the better. This fund will give them opportunities they wouldn't have without it.”

For more information on how to donate to the Hope Children with Disabilities Education Fund, please contact the Community Foundation at 217.789.4431 or visit CFLL.org.