For more than 100 years, the Robert family has been a fixture in the Springfield community.

The long-established Robert’s Seafood Market is a staple of many area families’ food buying decisions. Those community roots continued to deepen recently with the establishment of the Robert Family Fund through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln.

“Our family has been supported by the Springfield area for a long time. We believe in giving back to the community by helping people help themselves,” said Dean “Robbie” Robert.
The Robert family settled in Springfield 125 years ago, with Robbie’s grandfather starting the family business. They purchased a general, fresh seafood and live poultry market in 1916, which later became Robert’s Fish Co.

The store eventually became Robert’s Foods and Robert’s Seafood Market. The family sold Robert’s Foods to Sysco in 2004 but still operates the seafood market as a fourth generation business.

Through the years of operating the businesses and making connections within Springfield, there are a number of charitable causes in which the family has invested, including Habitat for Humanity, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Central Illinois Foodbank, Contact Ministries, and other Christian ministries through their church.

The family is looking for a way to help elevate those who are struggling but persevering, giving them an added boost in a time of need.

“Our intention is to use our fund as a vehicle for philanthropy and have our three daughters actively participate in the process,” Robert said.

The Community Foundation’s strong ties and knowledge about the community helped drive the Robert’s decision to bring the fund under the foundation’s umbrella.

“I established our fund at the Community Foundation as a way to diversify specific stock holdings and bring a more focused, conscious approach to our giving,” Robert said.

“Working with (Community Foundation President and CEO) John (Stremsterfer) and his team has been seamless. I’ve appreciated their transparent approach to this work and the ease with which they execute transactions.”

Robert and his wife, Pam, will oversee the direction of the fund’s giving. And just like how the family business has been passed down, the Roberts are looking to their children to carry on the philanthropic legacy.

The couple’s three daughters, Andrea McLaughlin, Julia Robert and Emily Netherton will eventually be involved in serving the community through the fund.

For more information on how to start a donor-advised fund, please contact the Community Foundation at 217.789.4431 or visit CFLL.org.