



When Giving Back, There's No Place Like Home

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By Jen DeJong

Springfield is a big, small town, with great potential and plenty to offer its residents. Springfield not only was my childhood home and launching pad for the “real world,” but now has become my home again, where my husband Marc and I will raise our girls.

Coming full circle offers a unique perspective. There are the positive elements, places and people that brought enjoyment years ago that you reconnect with. But there is also the recognition that much work needs to be done to help give everyone an opportunity to succeed and thrive.

There is an added personal element to philanthropy and giving back when living in your hometown. In a town like Springfield, it's almost impossible to go to the grocery store, the park, or an event and not see someone you know. It is a constant reminder that we're all in this together.

My husband and I started a donor-advised fund, the Luke 12:48 Fund, at the Community Foundation as a way to give back to the community we love. It allows us to slowly build up a fund while donating to local organizations along the way.

We can focus on which local nonprofits need assistance and what issue areas are the most pressing as the Community Foundation manages the fund, taking the administrative part off our plate. We receive financial reports and updates and know that our fund is well managed.

We are blessed to have the Community Foundation as a valuable resource in our community.

It helps makes the impact greater to the local agencies and organizations we're interested in helping, those that empower individuals with self-sustaining, long-term solutions to poverty. We believe all people are capable of moving out of poverty, and that in most cases they lack the support, resources, confidence, connections, and understanding of the system. Local social enterprises, such as Wooden It Be Lovely, for which I serve as a board member, are flipping the paradigm by helping those in need help themselves.

There are many people here who deeply care about improving our community in the areas of homelessness, poverty, education, and healthcare. We are encouraged and hopeful that Springfield will continue to launch the next generation of leaders, provide families a great place to raise children, be a desirable place for businesses and organizations, and support important causes for improving the community.



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That's why we plan to include our daughters in the decision-making with the donor-advised fund. Not only do we need to strive to create a better society, but also instill philanthropy and the action of giving back in the next generation.

There's a quote from Winston Churchill that I love and aim to live by: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Enriching the lives of those around us makes for a better community, and that impact is all the more distinct in our big, small town of Springfield. Let's change the future for the better, today.

Jen DeJong serves on the Community Foundation board of directors. To learn more about or to donate to donor-advised funds, please contact the Community Foundation at 217.789.4431 or visit us at CFL.org.