



Forging ahead to serve those who came before us

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By Cindy Denby

It takes a certain kind of perseverance to stay dedicated to a mission for 125 years.

There are changes in society, culture and technology to navigate throughout the decades. Leadership needs to span generations, and ingenuity is required to continue to rally new people to the cause.

For members of King's Daughters Organization, in our 125th year of service toward the elderly in Sangamon County, we have found not only how to ensure our mission stands the test of time but how to help it gain steam. In an environment where reports show volunteerism is down, King's Daughters defies that trend by continuing to pull together women across the county to our cause.



If you're wondering what the signs that have a gold and purple crown are around Springfield, that's us. The cause in a few words: Serving Our Community's Elderly Since 1893. We want to provide comfort for those who provided comfort for us. It's an effort that King's Daughters looks to support on all fronts, from granting to non-profits through our endowment fund at the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln, to our hundreds of members volunteering their time and energy to serve seniors.

It's an interesting story of how the endowment fund came about. King's Daughters started in 1893 with several groups of women voicing the urgency for a much-needed home for women, especially aged women. Two years later, the Carrie Post King's Daughters' Home for Women opened and began providing care.

For 111 years, King's Daughters provided the services of the home to seniors in Sangamon County. But like many programs or ideas or projects, needs evolve. And as King's Daughters Organization surveyed what would provide the most help to seniors, the decision was made to sell the home and put the proceeds into an endowment at the Community Foundation. That sparked a change that's transformed King's Daughters through the previous two decades.

In 2008, King's Daughters granted \$60,000 to seven different organizations. Since then, giving swelled and grantmaking continues to grow. A decade later, the fund has been able to grant a total of more than an astounding \$1.3 million to charities, helping provide seniors with a better life.

It means giving a woman struggling to pay her utilities a month of relief. It means providing food pantries across the county with not only healthy food, but items specifically for seniors not usually found

at pantries. It means providing transportation around town, maybe even to a show at the Muni that she's had circled on her calendar for months. It means giving a veteran a chance to pay their respects, visit the memorials in Washington D.C., and connect with other veterans.

We're still seeing new ideas emerge. There are innovative projects coming soon, including using virtual reality to help improve the quality of life for those with Alzheimer's, providing pet companions, teaching seniors how to improve their physical health, and more.

Now 125 years in, it's thrilling to see the direction King's Daughters is headed. We're looking forward to the next 125, and we would be even more excited if you would join us.

Cindy Denby is the president for King's Daughters Organization. To find out more about King's Daughters and its mission of helping seniors, visit kdospringfield.org.