

Thumbs Up: The Community Foundation for investing in the area

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The editorial board of *The State Journal-Register* offers this week's thumbs up/thumbs down.

Thumbs Up: To the [Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln](#), which is celebrating its 15th anniversary, for its continued philanthropy that benefits the Springfield area.

A community foundation is like a savings account: People or businesses establish funds used for charitable causes the donor cares about, or can contribute to existing initiatives that aim to improve a specific part of the community.

There were 180 funds with assets of \$29 million as of the end of July, Community Foundation officials recently told the editorial board. The 2016 report to the community announced that \$1.6 million was awarded in grants and scholarships to 194 charitable organizations that year.

The foundation also has played a role in several prominent initiatives, including the recently launched nurse-family program at the SIU School of Medicine that helps low-income, first-time pregnant women and their babies. It helped establish Innovate Springfield, a nonprofit subsidiary of the community foundation that serves as a business incubator; established a philanthropic group for younger professionals; and with the United Way, funds a biennial survey of Sangamon County residents to gauge their thoughts on numerous issues.

The Community Foundation makes our area stronger by investing in worthy initiatives while providing a pathway for others to do the same. We congratulate the foundation on its milestone, and encourage community members looking to make a lasting mark to utilize this wonderful asset.

Thumbs Up: To the solar eclipse on Monday.

Whether you watched it locally or traveled farther south to the Carbondale area to be in the path of totality, the solar eclipse inspired awe. People gathered at events, outside their offices or schools, or with their families, and simply looked up.

A solar eclipse happens when the moon passes between the sun and Earth, and it's not a sight many have seen: The last time a total solar eclipse was visible anywhere in the U.S. was in 1979, and not since 1918 had one been visible across the entire contiguous United States.

Special glasses were required to see the eclipse, and once they were on, most people had the same reaction: A gasp of delight, or a softly-spoken "wow" would escape their lips. A smile would come over their face, or they would slip into silence, content to witness a celestial masterpiece.

For a short time Monday, divisions faded as the skies grew dim. No matter your political party, skin color or faith, the country was united in its enchantment. Perhaps they were a little humbled too, by the awesome power Mother Nature holds over us. And hopefully, they came away with the perspective that showed Americans, despite their differences, can still come together.

We get to do it again on April 8, 2024, when another full solar eclipse will stretch from coast to coast — and once more track through southern Illinois. Let's not wait until then, though, to find ways to continue to come together.

Thumbs Up: To the city of Springfield for its efforts to collect long-overdue payments.

The city has implemented new practices that aim to more quickly and efficiently collect money owed to it, according to Treasurer Misty Buscher. Unpaid fines can be turned over to collection agencies (letters are sent prior to that happening). And a software system to track debt has combined several outdated systems and is accessible to other city offices. This way, if someone is, say, seeking a building permit from the city, officials can check to see if they owe money on parking tickets or other ordinance violations.

It's a smart move, as the city has seen decreasing revenues particularly in sales tax. The outstanding debt to the city for 2016 is about \$1.1 million, and about \$500,000 so far this year, city officials said in an [Aug. 20 article in the SJ-R](#). That's money Springfield simply can't just leave hanging out there.