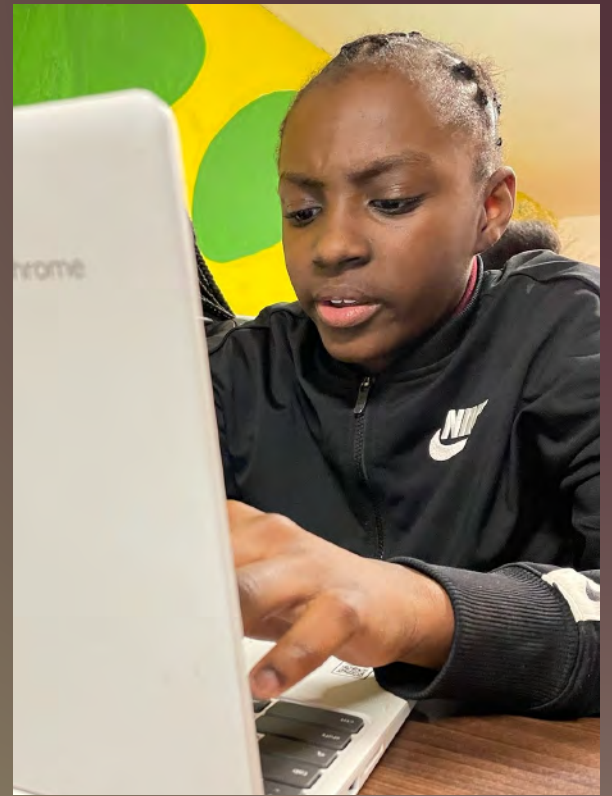




JOINING HANDS

to uplift and empower



sparkventures
2024 annual report

JOINING HANDS TO UPLIFT AND EMPOWER

a note from our executive director

As we reflect on 2024, we are filled with gratitude for your support. Over the year, Spark Ventures maintained strong support for our partner organizations, empowering communities around the world with the resources and opportunities to help transform their futures. Creating lasting change takes commitment and collaboration. The Spark community has shown such dedication to the grassroots work our partners are doing to uplift their communities.

At Spark Ventures, we believe true change happens through partnership. **By working hand-in-hand with local organizations, we unlock potential and tackle challenges in sustainable ways.** Whether it's farm investments in Zambia or vocational training in Nicaragua, women's entrepreneurship efforts in Mexico or computer literacy training in Chicago, our work is fueled by the



Kristin on right, pictured with Spark supporter Andrea Moonsammy

collective spirit of our partners and supporters. These efforts have inspired growth and built momentum toward a brighter future for all.

While we celebrate this year's accomplishments, we remain aware of the challenges ahead. The communities our partners serve face complex needs, but with your continued support, we are confident we can continue to invest in transformational programs that will uplift generations to come. **By joining hands with local leaders, donors, and volunteers, we will continue making meaningful progress and creating a lasting impact.**

This year's theme of "Joining Hands to Uplift and Empower" captures our shared mission: to empower individuals, strengthen communities, and inspire lasting change. Together, we can expand these efforts and help even more people unlock their full potential.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

With gratitude,

Kristin Schrepferman
Executive Director, Spark Ventures



spark by the numbers in 2024



837

partner program participants supported



128,000

meals served by our partner organizations



47

educators empowered with our support



53

community members visited our partners in-person



321

donors supported our mission with financial gifts*



\$1,062,318

raised to support our partners around the world*

* These financial numbers represent fiscal year 2024; all other numbers on this page represent calendar year 2024.

OUR MISSION

In 2024 Spark Ventures updated the language of our mission statement - to better align it with our values of collaboration, respect and inclusion. While we refined the language, the core of who we are and what we stand for remains unchanged:

spark ventures invests in sustainable solutions that empower communities around the world

We have a lasting impact by investing in partners serving under-resourced communities. When we direct human and financial resources into education, nutrition, healthcare, job creation, business development and environmental stewardship, we are fostering equitable communities where individuals can achieve their full potential.

Our work is anchored by strategic donors who contribute time, talent, and resources, and by an impact travel program that builds life-changing connections between our stakeholder and partner communities.



Hope Community School

TWAPIA, ZAMBIA | *partner since 2007*

thriving community school providing high-impact education, nutrition & healthcare programming for over 550 youth + their families



Asociación Las Tías

LEÓN, NICARAGUA | *partner since 2013*

community centers providing education, meals, healthcare & job skills training to over 150 youth + their families



Entreamigos

SAN PANCHO, MEXICO | *partner since 2017*

vibrant community center dedicated to education, environmentalism and entrepreneurship



We Grow Chicago

WEST ENGLEWOOD, CHICAGO | *partner since 2020*

community-led organization, empowering individuals to move from surviving to thriving



stories of impact



WINJI

hope community school

"I grew up in Twapia with my twin sister. After my father passed away, my mother worked odd jobs but couldn't afford school fees. In 2017, we were accepted into Hope Community School, which changed my life. I worked hard, became a prefect, and in 2023, achieved the best Grade 7 exam results in Hope's history. This earned me a place at Hillcrest National STEM Secondary School, one of Zambia's top schools. My dream is to become a radiologist - I am fascinated by how machines can reveal what is hidden inside the human body, and how doctors can use that information to save lives. I'm grateful to Hope Community School and Spark Ventures for helping me see that with hard work and faith, anything is possible. Education is truly the equalizer."



ELENA SARAHÍ

asociacion las tias

Elena Sarahí is the youngest of three and lives with her mother, grandfather, and brother in a relative's house, which they care for in exchange for a place to stay. She's a 5th grader and joined the youth program at Las Tias this past year. Her mother sought support from Las Tías because Elena Sarahí struggled with reading and writing, and her mother, unable to read herself, couldn't provide the help needed. She lost her father when she was 10 years old. Despite these challenges, she is focused on her education (where her favorite subject is math) and she dreams of becoming a doctor to help children. Elena Sarahí enjoys making crafts and through the piñata-making course, she has improved her skills and plans to sell piñatas from home to support her mother.



ITCHEL

entreamigos

Itchel, a 10-year-old in 5th grade, joined the Jungle Group at Entreamigos to learn how to manage her anxiety and safely express her emotions after facing challenges at school and in group activities. With the support of the program, Itchel developed healthy communication skills, which improved her participation, confidence, and academic performance, ultimately earning her a spot in the Scholarship Program. Her favorite subject is math, and she enjoys gymnastics, circus, Girl Scouts, and emotional intelligence classes at Entreamigos. She lives with her mom, Lili, her brother Itzael, and her dog. She loves playing with friends, taking fun classes, and drawing.



PARIS

we grow chicago

"The financial literacy course [offered in the Spark Inspiration Lab] was truly transformative because it revealed that my dream of financial freedom is not as distant as I once thought. By breaking down challenging topics like saving, budgeting, and financial discipline into simple, understandable steps, the course empowered me with clarity and confidence. It illuminated exactly where I can make adjustments, turning what once felt overwhelming into a tangible, achievable reality. Seeing the path forward so clearly has made my goals feel not just possible—but inevitable."

JOINING HANDS TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

impact travel experiences continue to successfully build connections

Our work is anchored by an impact travel program that builds life-changing connections between our stakeholder and partner communities. Travelers return from these experiences invigorated by the connections made, with the reality of the impact we are having crystallized by seeing it first hand. Our partner organizations benefit from direct investments that happen as a result of the trips, including the time and expertise shared by those who visit.

MEXICO | february

Our trip to Mexico this year incorporated feedback from both travelers and Entreamigos alike that more opportunities for connection with the young students in the Jungle Group would be meaningful for everyone. We were able to engage in an interactive experience and helped sponsor a field trip to a coffee plantation where travelers and students were treated to a tour, ending with an inventive scavenger hunt that had everyone working together.



"I was really inspired by the work Entreamigos is doing, and San Pancho is so picturesque! We sat down with the women entrepreneurs to hear their stories, struggles, and how Entreamigos has positively changed their lives and the whole community. We also went on a scavenger hunt in the forest with the students - it was so much fun to engage with the children and learn about all sorts of different plants. I can't wait to go back! It was amazing to witness how Spark's partners are transforming lives."

- aneil baron

Associate Board Member, Mexico Traveler and Senior Manager at KPMG

CHICAGO | may

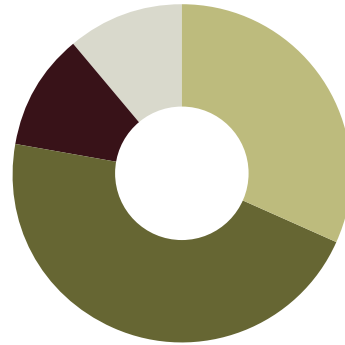
This year marked another successful installation of Unity Day at We Grow Chicago. Twenty eight Spark supporters joined over one hundred others in West Englewood for "The Largest Community Clean-Up in Chicago." Spark not only brought volunteers to the event, but also served as financial sponsors - leveraging our support into a community event that brings people in the neighborhood together for the collective good. Our team helped paint a mural that beautified the block - it was an impressive transformation.



ZAMBIA | july

In July, we partnered with a dedicated group of 18 educators and travelers from Chicago and Kansas City to bring a week of transformative learning experiences to the students at Hope in Zambia. Carefully crafted lessons aligned with the Zambian curriculum and focused on STEM, ELA, and computer studies, while activities like pinwheel experiments and "game show" quizzes brought texts like *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* to life. The classrooms buzzed with energy as educators introduced innovative teaching methods. Students also explored real-world math concepts such as budgeting and profit, participated in book clubs featuring stories of change-makers, and engaged in hands-on science experiments in Hope's new science lab.





\$1,062,318
fy²⁴ revenue & other support

- Individuals
- Events
- Corporate & Foundations
- In-Kind

View Spark Ventures' full audited financials and 990 at:
sparkventures.org/2024annualreport



“Teaching and traveling with Spark in Zambia was life-changing. The joy, resilience, and optimism I witnessed were deeply inspiring. Strengthening my connection to Spark’s mission has been an incredible privilege, fostering meaningful relationships in Ndola and beyond. I’m honored to be part of a global network dedicated to creating positive change.”

- Sydney Johnson

Associate Board Member, Zambia Traveler and Teacher at Lincoln Park Preschool & Kindergarten



a unified community of supporters

FOUNDERS' CIRCLE AWARD

DeanHouston

The Vallabhbai & Savitaben
 Patel Foundation

Patti Steeves O'Neil

GLOBAL SERVICE AWARD

Craig Leva



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- Kristin Schrepferman
- Carol Thompson *
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- Kitsy Smith
- Harli Thompson
- Jack Thompson *
- Cassandra Wade
- Daniel Weber *
- Mac Wolf *



the spark team

- Kristin Schrepferman
- Martha Vargas
- Julia Sistachs *
- Michelle Morin
- Stephanie Denzer

The Spark Ventures Associate Board underwent significant growth in 2024. The group takes the lead on two events per year that blend community building with fundraising (this year a bingo night and guest bartending event) and has been taking on a growing role in the annual Spring fundraising event.

*** New to the Spark Ventures team this year**

A FOLLOW UP: CHICKENS (and so much more!) IN ZAMBIA

Long-time supporters of Spark Ventures will remember that poultry farming has been part of the sustainability strategy for our friends at Hope Community School for many years. As far back as 2011 we were working with our Zambian partners to strengthen and expand their entrepreneurial capabilities, launching a chicken farm in Zambia's capital city of Lusaka. Chicken farming is not without challenges and in the intervening years the area where the Lusaka farm was located industrialized significantly (making it quite inhospitable to fragile baby chicks). In 2018 Hope purchased farmland much closer to their school campus in Twapia. The 25 acre farm has blossomed in the past years with all sorts of vegetables (from cabbage to corn to tomatoes) that supplement the meal program at Hope Community School and provide



additional revenue. In the past year the Hope Farm has added robustly to what they cultivate - this includes leveraging their existing knowledge about poultry farming, but also new and exciting adventures like tilapia ponds, goats and rabbits. Students visit the farm to learn agricultural skills and additional roles at the farm provide employment in the local Twapia community. The farm is fully sustainable, with the revenue covering labor (including two full-time farm workers), feed, equipment, seeds/seedlings, maintenance, animal care, etc. The additional profits help subsidize Hope Community School's expenses, covering the cost of the tailor who provides vocational training programs, and a portion of the salaries for six of Hope's secondary school teachers!



sparkventures

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View a digital version of this report at: sparkventures.org/2024annualreport