

sparkventures

business driven philanthropy

FOUNDERS REPORT

Spring 2018



GROWING AND DEEPENING OUR COMMITMENTS

A Note from Kristin Schrepferman, Managing Director, Spark Ventures

A few years ago, I learned about Spark Ventures from my friend and Spark board member, Kathy Wolf. I was immediately drawn to this unique organization and its model of investing in sustainable solutions to lift communities out of poverty. The more I learned about the life-changing impact of Spark's programs, the more I wanted to be involved. And now, well, I'm certainly more involved!

In my first six months as Spark's Managing Director, I traveled to all three of our partner organizations to meet the incredible leaders with whom we collaborate. Each trip left me feeling inspired by the strength of the families and communities we serve and deeply moved by their stories of hardship and perseverance in the face of extreme odds. I had the honor to experience first-hand how Spark's programs have changed their lives and given them hope for the future.

In this quarterly issue of our *Founder's Report*, I am excited to share a closer look at some of the projects we're working on to improve and expand support for our partners. Thanks to your commitment, we can continue to have an impact and change lives. I am truly honored to sit at the helm of such an incredible organization.

INSIDE THIS EDITION...

A Traveler Perspective

Zambia, through the eyes of an LPP teacher sharing literacy education insights.

Spark Community Growth

Read about highlights from our recent Wine Tasting event and meet two new Board Members.

Bricks to Books

Help us ensure the dedicated students in Zambia have the literary resources they need.

AND MORE...

THE IMPORTANCE OF BOOKS IN EARLY EDUCATION

Rachel Heinzman traveled to Zambia along with fellow teachers from Lincoln Park Preschool and Kindergarten as part of LPP's long-standing commitment to support Hope Community School's educational programming, specifically their preschool program. She is enthusiastic about the prospect of a library on the Hope campus after working closely with the educators there on their approach to teaching reading skills.

I went to Zambia to share ideas about teaching young students to read. My most profound realization happened when a teacher asked what I thought about teaching the letters of the alphabet out of alphabetical order.

"Of course it's ok, a student has lots of letters in their name and they will have seen all the letters before they go to school anyway."

"Where? Where will they have seen them?"

"Around town, on street signs, in books."

my suggestion was met with some raised eyebrows



Some of the students of Hope Community School see letters for the first time in their teachers' handwriting. Pre-reading skills such as recognizing that each written word represents a spoken word, understanding the direction text flows, even how to hold a book; skills that we assume are learned at home, are taught by the preschool and early grade teachers. And they are doing it well - Hope Community School has the highest reading proficiency and graduation rates in their region.



On my visit, I noticed a copy of Eric Carle's *Head to Toe* proudly displayed on the top of a book shelf in the preschool classroom in pristine condition. When Teacher Catherine read it aloud to her students they knew all the words and chanted it with her, imitating the actions as she read. It was one of three books in the room and it was treasured and beloved. The best-loved book in my classroom is *Prickly and Poisonous* and it is in shreds. It gets marched across the room to dramatic play when someone uses it to get an idea for a animal to act out, it gets taken outside to read in the shade of a tree, to the bathroom to read in line, to the art table to help students draw the animals inside it, students fall asleep reading it, this book gets sanitized. It is one of 80 books in my classroom...

Studies show that it's not only poverty that affects reading acquisition, but the critical variable of access to printed materials. Other studies have shown a correlation between the number of books in a classroom to reading scores of the students in it. With a new library supported by LPP and Spark Ventures, Hope's students will have access to hundreds of books which will help them excel in school and set them on a path to succeed in life. The library is a meaningful investment in the education of Zambia's future leaders.

Rachel's reflections on reading education in Zambia have been abridged to fit in this report - read her full post at: sparkventures.org/blog.



With construction already underway, the Hope Community School Library will have a huge impact on 400+ students who otherwise would not have access to diverse reading materials. You can find more on our campaign to fill the library with books on the back of this report.



Jennifer Kim



Lisa Madonia



Sue Bernstein



Michael Campbell

GROWING OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

Successful Wine Tasting + New Board Members

The Spark Ventures community of supporters continues to grow and provides an ongoing outflowing of support for our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua and Mexico. This dedication was most recently on display at our annual Wine Tasting event at Studio Paris in Chicago, which took place on April 26th. Over 200 supporters gathered together to raise a glass (and to raise some significant funds) in honor of our partner organizations.

Through ticket sales, a silent and live auction, as well as direct giving at the event, we raised over \$120,000 in support of our work. This event was made possible through the dedication and hard work of our event committee, chaired by Spark Ventures Board Members, Jennifer Kim and Lisa Madonia (pictured above - top left and top right images respectively).

The Wine Tasting also served as an informal opportunity to welcome into the Spark Ventures fold two new Board Members - Sue Bernstein (pictured bottom left) and Michael Campbell (pictured bottom right). These two new board members join a group of committed professionals who help steer organizational strategy and fundraising. If you would like more information about joining the board (or about joining our Associate Board or Young Professionals of Spark group), don't hesitate to reach out to Kristin - kschrepferman@sparkventures.org.



SAVE the DATE

ANNUAL SPARK VENTURES FALL GALA

Thursday, October 18, 2018 // 6-9pm

The Ivy Room // 12 E Ohio St., Chicago

SUPPORT OUR BRICKS TO BOOKS CAMPAIGN

Driven and determined by the emotional impact of their first trip to Zambia, staff from Lincoln Park Preschool and Kindergarten (LPP) arrived home with a clear vision; to address the tremendous need for high-quality books at Hope Community School in Zambia. LPP partnered with Spark Ventures to provide new textbooks for each student in 2017, and has made the commitment to support construction of Hope Community School's first library in 2018. The new library will open up enormous possibilities for these young learners, who until now, have had very little access to reading materials outside of the classroom.

"Leaders are readers, readers are leaders. I am a leader of today and tomorrow. Books will make me a better reader." - Eneless Ng'andwe, Grade 5

While the new library is under construction, the Spark Ventures Associate Board has taken on the task of fundraising to outfit the new space with quality reading materials. Join us to help raise funds for the first 1000 books in the library.

"Books in the library will help me to learn how to speak and write in English and other languages." - Oscar Malama, Grade 3

You can help ensure that the dedicated students at Hope Community School have the literary resources they need to achieve their potential.

On average, each book is just \$5.

sparkventures.org/brickstobooks

OUR GOAL:

1,000 books!



JOIN US ON AN UPCOMING SPARK JOURNEY

Join us to see our work empowering communities around the world. On these journeys you will take part in meaningful engagement with the communities and local leaders we partner with. Plus, you'll discover the history and natural wonders of the region and enjoy boutique hotels and exceptional meals. More details at sparkventures.org/travel.



ZAMBIA // JULY 15-23



NICARAGUA // AUGUST 8-12



MEXICO // OCTOBER 25-28

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