

sparkventures

FOUNDERS REPORT

Spring 2019



PROUD TO BE PART OF IT

A note from Michael Campbell, Spark Board Member and Wine & Dine Emcee

When I joined the Spark Ventures Board of Directors just over a year ago, I had no idea how involved I would be and how important this organization would become for me. As I stood in front of the packed room at The Dalcy, emcee-ing our Wine & Dine event on April 25th, I realized that I was surrounded by others who, like me, have been overwhelmed by the power and impact of the work Spark Ventures does.

I have learned that this is not a new phenomenon - the Spark Ventures community has been an active, committed and engaged bunch from Day One. I suspect it is in large part because so many people have traveled to see our work in action at our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua or Mexico (or perhaps to all 3 locations!) and the people you meet on these journeys are all wonderful and unforgettable.

I've had the pleasure of visiting our partners in Zambia twice this past year and took a trip to Mexico this past February. I am looking forward to returning to Zambia this July where I'll sit down with the leadership team to hear about their priorities, challenges and progress. When talking with the leaders at any of our partner organizations, it is very evident that our support has an enormous impact. Together, we are ensuring a quality education, healthcare & empowerment of hundreds of children and future leaders. I was thrilled that so many of you raised your paddles with me at the Wine & Dine event - together we are improving lives around the world and I couldn't be prouder to be part of it with you.

INSIDE THIS EDITION...

A Las Tías Update

Checking in on our Nicaraguan partners, one year after the country's political unrest

Introducing W.O.W.

New "Women of Worth" provides support and programming for the elderly women of Twapia, Zambia

Wine & Dine Highlights

Pictures and highlights from our stunning and successful annual event in Chicago

AND MORE...

CHECKING IN ON NICARAGUA

One year after political demonstrations erupted in Nicaragua, Las Tías is stronger than ever! We spoke with Candida, a director at Las Tías, to gain insight into what life was like in the midst of the unrest and what's happening now that things have settled.



How have the people of Nicaragua been impacted by the political and social unrest in the past year?

One of the biggest effects that our country's unrest had was on private and state layoffs around all of Nicaragua, including León. But those who kept their jobs now can go to work normally and businesses are open, the only ones that remain closed are bars, hostels, etc. Also, visits from tourists and cruises have resumed and there is a sense of tranquility. Unemployment remains the main issue. Unemployed fathers and mothers struggle to maintain balance and well-being within their families, creating psychological strain. Some have traveled outside of Nicaragua looking for better opportunities and others have returned.

How have the students responded to having a place like Las Tías to spend their time?

Our students know that Las Tías is a safe place where they will always be cared for and supported. It is a place where they can study, play and just be children. They have maintained their positive attitudes, desire to excel and to pursue careers. As expected, some parents remain afraid that Nicaragua will stay in a state of distress. We assure them that Las Tías will always be here for them.

How has Las Tías persevered through the political and social unrest?

Overcoming the crisis in Nicaragua has been an ongoing process. We are women who are committed to not giving up. We are always active, talking with students about the situation and how to stay positive throughout. We have highlighted the importance of students continuing their studies and focusing on their priorities. We held a parent meeting to discuss the situation, and parents shared that under the pressure of unemployment they are struggling to survive, selling goods in markets & on the streets. We discussed how Spark Ventures has helped by providing food and scholarships for their children. Spark has always been alongside us through the most difficult times, supporting the students and their families.

Read more of our interview on the Spark Blog: sparkventures.org/blog





WE'VE BEEN WOW-ED BY W.O.W.

One of the newest programs at our Zambian partner organization is a group formed to fulfill nutritional, healthcare, emotional and social needs of Twapia's elderly women. The Women of Worth program, or "W.O.W." group's goal is to help these women age with dignity. The program has grown under the leadership of Judy Daka, who previously served as a teacher at Hope Community School.

Women who participate in the program receive a healthy meal at each meeting, along with food supplies & vitamins. They also benefit from the opportunity for social interaction with their peers and regular counseling.

W.O.W. meets monthly on the Hope Community School Campus. Each meeting consists of songs & dances, introductions from the group members, skills workshops and discussions about health. In addition, a community guest speaker attends each meeting to give insight on health, social services and more. A recent W.O.W. guest speaker from the Ndola Police Department stressed that she is a resource the women can reach out to for both their community & personal concerns.

At each meeting, a member leads a "workshop" and shares a skill or knowledge in an area of expertise with the other members. This can range from artistic skills to cooking abilities to sharing their knowledge on how they individually generate an income or keep their family sustained. In previous meetings, the women have learned about weaving rugs from fabric scraps and making food to sell at the market as sources of income. One member shared her recipe and a taste of African bologna with the group, which is made from ground nuts, flour, & salt.

The Women of Worth program aligns with Spark's mission of capacity building and leader empowerment. W.O.W. enriches the community of Twapia and gives these women the opportunity and resources they need to reach their full potential.

WINE & DINE BREAKS RECORDS

Our 2019 Wine & Dine was one for the record books - raising over \$160,000 for our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua and Mexico. We highlighted how we are building momentum at our partner organizations. Michael Campbell and Alyson Marguerat shared their personal stories and perspectives, the food at our new venue, The Dalcy, was stunning and delicious, and we debuted a new video of our work, which you can watch at sparkventures.org/buildingmomentum. Special thanks to our event committee and Spark's Board of Directors for making this event possible.



A glimpse of recent Mexico travel...
JOIN US ON A JOURNEY TO SEE OUR WORK IN ACTION
check out upcoming dates here: sparkventures.org/travel

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