

sparkventures

FOUNDERS REPORT

Summer 2019



SEEKING ADVENTUROUS TEACHERS

A note from Sue Bernstein, Spark Board Member

I have traveled to Zambia, to Hope School, six times - most recently this July. I can't seem to stay away. I am inspired by the incredible teachers and community leaders I have met there. Each trip, I get to know them a bit better. And, on each trip, I have seen other travelers bring their personal expertise and knowledge and share their skills with the Hope staff.

On my last trip to Hope, a number of us return travelers ("Spark-aholics" you might call us) stayed at the school for an extended period, working directly with the teachers and the students, visiting classrooms, and leading themed activities throughout the week. It was this trip, and Spark's incredibly positive experience launching an ongoing collaboration with Lincoln Park Preschool teachers, that inspired the creation of the Educator Empowerment Initiative.

In this report we're featuring the personal story of one teacher who has traveled with us on a previous trip - Mr. David. If you know an educator you think might be interested in traveling to Zambia to collaborate with teachers and students at Hope, please share our program with them (you can find more details here: sparkventures.org/eei). Though I've been back six times, it only takes one visit to feel like part of the Hope School family.

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Introducing the newest member of the Spark Ventures Board of Directors

Educator Empowerment Initiative

Read Mr. David's personal experience and learn more about this initiative to bring teachers to Zambia

Recycle to Empower

Entreamigos' recycling program has broad benefits - including support for women

AND MORE...

INTRODUCING JULIE COOK

We are thrilled to introduce you to the newest member of the Spark Ventures Board of Directors - Julie Cook. Julie has been a Spark Ventures supporter for nearly 10 years. Recently she traveled to see our work in action in Zambia, and she was inspired to deepen her involvement by joining the Spark Ventures Board.



What initially motivated you to get involved with Spark Ventures and our work?

I attended a Spring Wine Event almost 10 years ago when my good friends Anne and Gary Vlk invited me. I thought "I like Wine and I'm interested to hear more!" This is where I was initially introduced to Spark. After attending the Fall Gala, and hearing the inspirational stories from Spark founder, Rich Johnson and the Director of Hope Community School in Zambia, Charles Mumba, I was touched by Spark's vision and mission and also impressed by their business model. My husband and I have been supporters ever since.

You traveled with us in January to see our work in Zambia first-hand. How has that impacted your view of our work?

It was so amazing to see things in action first-hand and to have the opportunity to engage directly with the staff and the students. It was truly inspirational. To see how much has been done at Hope, how far they have come and their vision for future projects was gratifying as an investor. We also saw the vegetable farm first-hand - it has come so far in such a short time! Experiencing this trip with other Spark travelers led to new and deeper relationships within the Spark community. Hope School is truly making a difference in the children's lives, and the opportunity to spend time with them was a joy.

What are you most looking forward to in the coming year as a member of the Board?

I'm excited to become even more involved with Spark and looking forward to seeing how I can help with their goals and initiatives.

Help us get to know you better - tell us something fun about your background!

I am from Chicago (and an avid Cubs fan!), but traveling is a passion. I love to explore new places, soak up the culture, architecture, old churches, scenic views and food. However, I confess that I did not try the caterpillars in Zambia.





MR. DAVID'S EDUCATOR EMPOWERMENT EXPERIENCE

In January 2018, I went on a life-changing trip to Zambia with Spark Ventures as part of Lincoln Park Preschool & Kindergarten's (LPP) *Vacation with a Purpose* program. I hesitate when I say life-changing because the phrase is often overused. *But it was, in fact, a life-changing journey.*

As I packed, I thought about all of the teaching tips and tricks I have learned in the past 13 years as an educator that I could share with the teachers in Zambia. I remember thinking about how I could teach the teachers to incorporate more literacy into lesson planning. I compiled a list of books I thought would be great resources, printed off a 100-page guided reading packet that I thought would be helpful, and I broke down a year's worth of Kindergarten lesson plans to give to the teachers.

On my first day at Hope School, I was immediately taken aback by the number of talented teachers and engaged students. The children were eager to soak up new information because the teachers were incredibly engaging and thoughtful with their planning. At that point, I threw away my lists and packets and changed my focus. Across the board, classrooms were heavily reliant on memorization, repetition, and other rote memory techniques. The children memorized sentences in English to greet us just as they memorized times tables and spelling. Mid-week, the travelers were given the opportunity to plan and organize a lesson for the children in our reading groups. Here, we modeled meaningful and open-ended learning techniques. The Zambian teachers seemed to be inspired to bring these methods back to their classrooms. I was humbled and honored to be a part of this process.

Next, it was my turn to learn...



Read about what Mr. David learned while in Zambia and find out more about how we are building global partnerships between US-based teachers and Hope School through our Educator Empowerment Initiative at:

sparkventures.org/eei

Know an adventurous teacher like Mr. David? Share our Educator Empowerment Initiative proposal with them! It takes only one trip to Zambia for them to become part of the Hope family.

RECYCLE TO EMPOWER

Spark Ventures provides funding and strategic support to the Women's Entrepreneur Program at Entreamigos, our partner in Mexico. This program empowers women of the lowest socio-economic level. These women meet regularly and produce products from recycled goods that are sold in Entreamigos' gallery. They are paid for their products and also gain valuable business skills. Proceeds from the sale of the products are invested back into programs at Entreamigos.

Entreamigos also educates their community about the importance of environmentalism in order to ensure that San Pancho remains a clean, healthy and beautiful community. Their innovative recycling program is a key part of this goal. The Spark Ventures' Associate Board is fundraising to provide new funding for the recycling program at Entreamigos - which will in turn support more opportunities for women in the entrepreneur group.

With just \$15 you can sponsor a recycling bin for a month.
Learn more at sparkventures.org/recycle.



save the date spark ventures' annual
FALL GALA

thursday

10|10|19

The Ivy Room ■ 12 E. Ohio St., Chicago ■ 6pm



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