

# sparkventures

## FOUNDERS REPORT

Fall 2019



## THE MOST STUNNING LIBRARY I'VE EVER SEEN

A note from Constance Benrud, Spark Board Member & Co-Chair of the 2019 Fall Gala

I had the distinct honor to be in Zambia this summer and witness the ribbon cutting for the new Hope School Library, and I can honestly say it took my breath away to walk through the doors of the new space. It is bright and welcoming and full of incredible potential. I am inspired just thinking about the learning that will happen under this roof.

I was also stunned most recently by the generosity of the Spark Ventures community at our record breaking Fall Gala, though to be fair, I shouldn't have been - the Spark Ventures community has a history of deep, passionate commitment to our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua and Mexico.

There are a lot of exciting updates in this report. I hope you enjoy taking a look at how Spark Ventures is standing alongside our partners and empowering future leaders around the world.

### INSIDE THIS EDITION...

#### 30 Years in Nicaragua

*Celebrating an important milestone after a tumultuous year*

#### Global Service Award

*Recognizing an individual whose service to the Spark Ventures community has gone above and beyond*

#### Record Breaking Event

*Yet again, the Spark Ventures community breaks fundraising records to support our partners*

AND MORE...





## CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SERVICE IN NICARAGUA

This past September, the Las Tías team celebrated 30 years of serving vulnerable youth in León, Nicaragua. Over the past 30 years, their programs have evolved and grown significantly. But their commitment to bettering the lives of the youth in their community has been unwavering. On September 16th there were speeches and songs, traditional dancing and cake. A number of the original "tías" (the "aunts" who founded the organization) were on hand to share in the celebration. Many of these inspiring women are still deeply involved in the organization's leadership, alongside a group of younger, next generation leaders who will be shepherding the organization into its next 30 years and beyond.

Spark Ventures is proud to stand alongside these dedicated community leaders. They have weathered a tough year in Nicaragua where political turmoil spilled into the streets, disrupted daily life and has resulted in economic instability. This turmoil forced Spark to suspend our trips to Nicaragua. However with the political climate much more stable, we are eager to make a return. A small group of people from the Spark community will be traveling to Nicaragua in November to explore re-starting our trips. We hope to have new dates for 2020 on the calendar soon!

### PIÑATAS FOR SALE!

One of Las Tías' signature programs, supported by Spark Ventures funding, is their vocational training initiative. Carpentry, hair cutting, and sewing have been some of the most popular programs to date. And now they have added a new class - piñata making! Learning how to make these delicate and vibrant handicrafts provides the students a marketable skill - and makes for a lot of fun! So far, attendance in the piñata class has been at capacity each week.



# GLOBAL SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT: HEATHER DUNCAN

*At this year's Fall Gala, we honored a very special member of our Spark family with our first ever Global Service Award. This award recognizes individuals whose service to the Spark Ventures community has gone above and beyond in unique and inspiring ways. We were proud to present the inaugural award to Heather Duncan.*



Dr. Heather Duncan has a significant role as an Assistant Professor of Nursing at North Park University. She is a Family Nurse Practitioner, providing mobile health care in Chicago homeless shelters and holds a masters in nursing and a PhD in Urban Studies. Ten years ago when presented with the opportunity, she stepped up to be the Global Advisor for North Park University's annual Global Partnerships to Zambia.

For Heather, traveling to Zambia for the first time was like coming home. She was welcomed with open arms by the community and instantly made connections. There were dramatic healthcare gaps and even before the end of her first visit, she knew she would be back. She now returns annually, with a group of nursing and other undergraduate students, running a clinic each May and partnering with local health professionals in Zambia to consult on another clinic each November. Both clinics provide physical assessments, malaria testing, deworming treatments, treatments for common illnesses and referrals when needed. Over the past decade, she has provided healthcare to thousands of underserved children.

Heather has exemplified Spark Ventures' core values: Social Responsibility, Collaborative Relationships, Mutual Accountability, Deep Humility and Human Dignity. It is an honor to have her in our Spark family and we can't think of a more deserving individual to receive our inaugural Global Service Award.



*For our complete profile on Heather - including the story of how one of the teachers at Hope Community School came to name her son in Heather's honor, check out the Spark Ventures blog:*

[sparkventures.org/heatherduncan](https://sparkventures.org/heatherduncan)

# A RECORD BREAKING EVENING - FALL GALA 2019

It was a night to remember - with remarks from some of our longest standing supporters alongside some of the youngest members of the Spark family, and topped off with a visit by our always inspiring partners from Zambia, our 2019 Fall Gala was an incredible evening. The excitement in the room was palpable and it showed when the fundraising began. By the end of the night we raised over \$200,000 for our work around the globe - a single day record for Spark Ventures. These funds will be put to powerful use, empowering our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua and Mexico. Thank you to all who joined us and made the evening an overwhelming success.



THIS HOLIDAY SEASON,  
HELP EMPOWER FUTURE LEADERS  
[sparkventures.org/holidaygiving](https://sparkventures.org/holidaygiving)

This holiday season you can give a secondary school scholarship in honor of your college-bound nephew, give a month of meals in honor of your mom, or give malaria testing and treatment in honor of that friend who is passionate about healthcare for all.



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