

sparkventures

FOUNDERS REPORT

Spring 2022



TAKING STOCK OF WHAT OUR COMMUNITY HAS ACCOMPLISHED

A Note from Julie & Kevin Cook, Wine & Dine Co-Chairs

We've been Spark Ventures supporters (and a board member, and travelers) for over 13 years, so Spark holds a very special place in our hearts. First-hand experience with our partners has shown us the incredible impact we can have, but co-hosting the recent Spark Ventures Wine & Dine offered us an opportunity to step back and honor all that we as a community have been able to accomplish. The stories and statistics shared at the event re-ignited our enthusiasm and affirmed the power of our community.

INSIDE THIS EDITION...

New Equipment Purchases

Hands-on vocational training program investments

Women of Worth

Updates on empowering the elderly in Twapia, Zambia

The Imagination Explorers

We Grow Chicago program highlight

AND MORE...

Spark Ventures partner organizations around the world are enabling:

 | **65 JOBS**

 | **EDUCATION FOR ALMOST 700**

 | **HEALTHCARE & NUTRITION FOR 600**

 | **OVER 160 MICROLOANS**

 | **VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR OVER 50**

Together our impact is profound. We hope you enjoy the updates in this report as they shed just a bit more light on various initiatives being undertaken by our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chicago.

NEW EQUIPMENT EXPANDS HANDS-ON PROGRAMS

Investments in new machinery at both Entreamigos and Las Tías provide additional vocational training opportunities

Skills-based, hands-on learning is a powerful and popular program offering at each of our partner locations. Though the programs differ based on community needs, they are unified in their respective goals of teaching marketable skills to empower beneficiaries to build independent and self-sustaining career paths for themselves and their families.

Thanks to generosity from the Spark Ventures community that allowed us to extend additional support to our partners, Entreamigos and Las Tías were able to purchase new equipment to expand and improve their existing vocational programs.



New Glass Cutting Machine

ENTREAMIGOS | MEXICO

The women entrepreneurs at Entreamigos are doing incredible work with a new glass cutting machine. The entrepreneurs use recycled bottles to create items like drinking glasses & candle holders that are sold in the gallery. Proceeds from the sales are invested back into Entreamigos programming.



New Carpentry Equipment

LAS TÍAS | NICARAGUA

The carpentry program at Las Tías has been in existence for over a decade but got a significant boost with this new equipment. In the past, the program has struggled to provide sufficient tools and materials to all the students interested in learning carpentry skills. Students can now make high quality pieces while learning how to use professional grade equipment. The additional funding also allowed Las Tías to purchase enough wood for a full year of student projects.

WOMEN OF WORTH: SERVING THE ELDERLY IN TWAPIA, ZAMBIA

Providing fundamental health and wellness support to an underserved group of women

The elderly women of Twapia, Zambia often lack reliable financial security. Without significant social safety nets, they are reliant on family and community support to get by - often leaving them disempowered and struggling to have their basic needs met.

Our Zambian partners at Hope Community School primarily target educating and empowering youth. They have embraced the opportunity to expand their services to also support elderly women in the community - many of whom are guardians of Hope School students. By doing so, they are improving the lives of the elderly, which provides more stable homes for Twapia's children, ultimately giving them a better chance of staying in school and breaking the cycle of poverty.

The Women of Worth (WoW) initiative was formed to fulfill nutritional, healthcare, emotional and social needs of Twapia's elderly women and to help them age with dignity. Launched in early 2019, the WoW group now serves 43 and gathers these women together on a monthly basis. Each meeting includes songs & dances, skills workshops and a community guest speaker to give insight on health, social services and the importance of education. Recent monthly programming included health talks, medical check-ups and related treatments.

“The women who come for our WoW gatherings are motivated to be the healthiest and strongest versions of themselves. They are building connections to community resources that they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to access - the program has really hit its stride in the past 6 months.”

- MAMA LILLIAN, WOW PROGRAM LEADER

This program was created by Spark supporter, Jean “JJ” Janecek after she bonded with the women on one of her trips to Zambia. Her ongoing support and dedication to these Women of Worth is having a generational impact on the community of Twapia.



WE GROW CHICAGO PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

The Imagination Explorers and The We Grow Computer Lab

We Grow is continuing the work that Spark supported in last year's Kids on the Move summer camp with the Imagination Explorers program. After school, children safely gather on the Peace Campus to participate in themed activities and outings in the Imagination Explorers program. Activities include homework help, dance, yoga, sports, S.T.E.M., arts & creative expression, and healthy cooking. The program offers academic, creative, and social-emotional enrichment in a safe and loving space. Thanks to Spark Ventures' support for the We Grow computer lab, these students are now able to broaden their horizons with technology access and have been using the computers for homework and additional extracurricular activities.

The computer lab is a multi-generational investment. It is benefiting the Imagination Explorers students (and other We Grow youth) directly via their newfound access to educational reinforcement and technology resources. It is also benefiting their parents, guardians, and other community members with digital literacy programs, increased access to employment, and opportunities for continuing education.



WINE & DINE SUCCESS

Thank you for yet another successful virtual gathering of the Spark Ventures community

With a spectacular showing of support from the Spark Ventures community both near and far, we raised over \$225,000 at our April 2022 Wine & Dine virtual event! Thank you for staying connected with us in purpose and in spirit. Every dollar will have a direct and powerful impact on our partners around the globe.

While we are never sure what lies around the corner, we are hopeful that we'll celebrate our 2022 Fall Gala in person and be able to raise a glass together to toast the incredible community of Spark Ventures supporters who have stayed dedicated to our mission over the past couple years. Stay tuned!



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