

sparkventures

FOUNDERS REPORT

Summer 2022



APPRECIATION AND ANTICIPATION

A Note from Kathy Wolf, Secretary of the Spark Ventures Board of Directors

August Appreciation is a long-standing tradition at Spark Ventures - an opportunity for an intentional "thank you" to those who have helped support and sustain the work we do. This August, we were able to host a small Chicago gathering for Board Members and other local supporters.

As I looked around and felt all of the excitement, I was so energized by the community we have built here at Spark. Many (including my whole family!) have shared memories of visiting our partners around the globe in person and building first-hand connections with their leaders and beneficiaries. I am grateful that these shared connections have been deep enough to help sustain our partnerships through the past years of travel hiatus. And I am enthusiastic as we take steps towards resuming trips to Mexico, Zambia and Nicaragua in 2023 so we can introduce more people to our incredible partners.

This gathering also made me even more excited about our upcoming Spark 15 Fall Gala on October 20th. Our first major in-person event (with a virtual option) since the pandemic began will be an evening to remember and I can't wait to bring together even more members of the Spark Ventures community - including leadership from our partners in Zambia, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chicago!

I hope you enjoy reading more about the event and other updates in this report, and I hope to see you either in-person or via Zoom at Spark 15! Spark Ventures is an incredibly important organization to me and my whole family, and I am so grateful you are a part of the Spark Ventures community.

INSIDE THIS EDITION...

Zambia Sewing Initiative

Teaching valuable vocational skills

15 Years of Impact

A timeline of our accomplishments together

Join us for Spark 15

Our first hybrid event - in Chicago AND online

AND MORE...

SEWING INITIATIVE IN ZAMBIA TEACHES VALUABLE SKILLS

Stitching Programs Together to Serve the Whole Student

In Zambia, our partner offers many programs to support their community. From a meal program, to microlending, education, to elderly community support - the offerings are aimed at supporting a multitude of needs for the hundreds of individuals served by Hope each year.

One of the newer offerings, a Tailoring Initiative, has been well received by the eager group of students making up the inaugural cohort - 14 Hope Community School students, plus an additional 12 community members. The students selected for this program are in 5th-8th grade and were chosen because they have struggled in an academic environment. Recognizing that every child has unique talents & skills, the Hope team invited these students to participate in the tailoring program which is opening a vocational pathway towards self-sufficiency. The sewing lessons offer a chance to learn a valuable skill set that can be directly leveraged in the future.

“So far I can gladly say they are able to draft a dress - they cut the pieces and start making it. At the moment their pace is a bit slow but they should be able to improve with time since they are just getting started. We are so excited for the new opportunities for self sufficiency and entrepreneurship these new skills will bring for these students.”

- JANE BANDA, TAILORING TEACHER

In addition to the sewing lessons, the students have practiced their entrepreneurship skills by promoting and selling doormats they produced in an early lesson to the teachers and staff at Hope. Many of the offices are now adorned with these doormats - a symbol of the budding entrepreneurs and their new skills!



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF IMPACT

This year marks 15 years since the initial “spark” that launched our organization. We are excited to continue to build upon the incredible impact we have had to date around the world.



JULY 2006

Rich Johnson, Scott Barbeau and Dan Marcus travel to Zambia and meet Charles & Margaret Mumba

2007

Spark Ventures incorporates as a nonprofit (February); Launch of meal program + clinics in Zambia mark Spark Ventures' first official ongoing supported programs



2008

First “Partnership Trip” brings Spark Ventures travelers to meet our partners and build connections in-person

Since that first trip, there have been **700+** travelers who have visited our partner organizations around the globe.

2009

Hope's campus begins to take shape with construction on The Shelby Goldstein Schoolhouse and dedication of Hope House Orphanage

Hope now serves **450+** students each year.



2013

New Partner Organization
ASOCIACIÓN LAS TÍAS
Nicaragua

150+ youth served annually

2017

New Partner Organization
ENTREAMIGOS
Mexico



20 Women's Entrepreneur Group Members annually
20 at-risk-youth supported by the “Jungle Group” annually



2017

Launch of Preschool at Hope Community School

2018

Purchase of farmland in Zambia allows Hope to launch a vegetable farm

25 acres of farmland



2019

Ribbon cutting for the Hope Community School Library

2019

Launch of Literacy program at Las Tías in Nicaragua teaching mothers of beneficiaries to read and write



2020

New Partner Organization
WE GROW CHICAGO
United States

provided **40+** children & teens in-person educational support during COVID remote learning (+ other supported programs)

2020

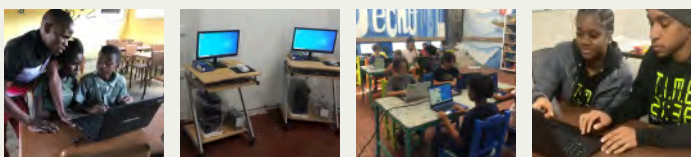
The Spark Ventures community steps up to significantly support a COVID Emergency Fund to support urgent needs brought on by the pandemic



2021 - 2022

Four computer labs launched or expanded to support digital connectivity and expanded learning opportunities

45 new computers for students at our partner organizations



We look forward to what the future holds for Spark Ventures and our partners around the globe.



spark 15: *it all began with a spark*
building a lasting and sustainable impact

JOIN US FOR SPARK 15: IT ALL BEGAN WITH A SPARK

You're Invited! Join us in Chicago OR on Zoom.

The Spark Ventures community has spent the past 15 years providing sustainable solutions to lift communities out of poverty and empower future leaders. On October 20th we are gathering together to celebrate this impact and look ahead to the future impact we will have together.

After a few years without in-person gatherings, we are making up for lost time. For the first time in Spark Ventures' history, we are inviting leadership from all four of our partners to join us in-person for this celebratory event. Pending visa approvals, we are eager for you to hear first-hand from these inspiring leaders about their grassroots community work!

We recognize that the footprint of the Spark Ventures community is large. A silver lining of our virtual events was the ability to extend our celebrations onto computer screens around the country (and around the globe). In recognition that not everyone will be able to make it to Chicago for this event, we are hosting our first ever hybrid event. Our virtual guests can join the celebration on Zoom, and have the option of receiving a special delivery of sparkling wine so everyone can toast to 15 years of building a lasting and sustainable impact from wherever you are.

Tickets for Spark 15 are available now. We look forward to celebrating together.

sparkventures.org/spark15

sparkventures

PO Box 641004, Chicago, IL 60664 | 773.293.6710
View this report online: sparkventures.org/foundersreport