

# sparkventures

## FOUNDERS REPORT

Fall 2022



## 15 YEARS OF EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS AND BUILDING DEEP CONNECTIONS

A Note from Spark's Co-Founders:  
Dan Marcus, Scott Barbeau & Rich Johnson

When the three of us got on a plane and flew to Zambia in July of 2006, we had some base level expectations for what we might learn and do on the trip. But we never could have anticipated the connections we'd make with the Hope community, or the incredible partnership that would erupt from that initial spark.

Exceeding expectations has been a theme for our community. The Spark Ventures family has rallied around our global partners in incredible ways both large and small over the past 15 years - thanks to the deep connections we first made in Zambia, and the continued deepening of the Spark community's connections with each of our grassroots partners. Our partners are unwavering advocates for their communities and it is through mutual respect and collaboration that we have helped empower them to do their best work.

Our community's commitment to our partners has been strong despite the suspension of our trips and other challenges brought on by the pandemic. Needless to say, we were elated to see the rekindling of personal connections and moments of inspiration that happened between our partners' leaders and Spark supporters at our recent Fall Gala. And we're eagerly awaiting the reignition of our impact travel program in 2023, bringing supporters to the field to see our work in action (read on for details).

Thank you to all of you who have been on this journey with us thus far. We look forward to the impact we can continue to make together for the next 15 years and beyond.

### INSIDE THIS EDITION...

#### 33 Years of Impact

Las Tías celebrates an anniversary in Nicaragua

#### Travel with Spark in 2023

Announcing the reopening of our impact travel program

#### Fall Gala Highlights

Recapping a successful celebration at Spark 15

AND MORE...

# ¡FELIZ ANIVERSARIO ASOCIACIÓN LAS TÍAS!

Our partners in Nicaragua celebrate 33 years serving students and their families

With musical presentations, speeches, raffles, an enormous piñata, plus food and cake for everyone, our partners at Asociación Las Tías in León, Nicaragua rang in 33 years of serving vulnerable youth in their community.

Spark Ventures has partnered with Las Tías since 2013, and in this time we've seen the incredible impact they have on the lives of young people who come through the doors of their two community centers each day.

“For 33 years, Las Tías has focused on holistic support for high-risk youth and their families. We fight every day for the well being of the young people we serve. These young people deserve a chance to thrive and build strong futures for themselves. We are here to help make that a possibility.”

- CANDIDA MÉNDEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASOCIACIÓN LAS TÍAS

With Spark Ventures' support, Las Tías provides educational programs and tutoring, socio-emotional support (via an on staff psychologist), vocational training and literacy programs, a regular meal program, and more to over 150 youth and their families.

We look forward to many more years of partnership.



# ANNOUNCING: A LONG AWAITED RETURN TO TRAVEL

With great anticipation and enthusiasm, our international partners are ready to welcome the Spark Ventures family back in-person

After a three year break, we're excited to announce that we're resuming the Spark Ventures impact travel program. Since our inception, we have brought over 700 travelers to Zambia, Nicaragua and Mexico to see our work in action. These trips are unforgettable journeys bringing to life our unique approach to philanthropy and our on-the-ground partnerships. We're thrilled we can bring members of the Spark Ventures community to engage directly with our international partners once again.

Our partner organizations have been asking when we're coming back for quite some time now. They are eager to build connections with our travelers, and to share their passion for what they do.

In 2023 we will offer the following trips to each of our international partners. We hope you will consider joining us on one (or more!) of these life changing journeys.



## MEXICO

Entreamigos

FEBRUARY 9-12, 2023

## ZAMBIA

Hope Community School

JULY 23-31, 2023

## NICARAGUA

Las Tías

NOVEMBER 8-12, 2023



What can you expect on a Spark Ventures impact trip? These experiences are culturally empowering, mutually beneficial and focused on lasting impact. You will take part in meaningful engagement with community leaders and see our work first-hand while experiencing the best of the countries we work in. Our expertly curated adventures will introduce you to unique cultural highlights, historical insights & natural wonders while you enjoy accommodations in boutique hotels with exceptional meals.

We hope you'll consider traveling with us in 2023. For more information, please reach out to Spark's Program Manager, Martha Vargas ([mvargas@sparkventures.org](mailto:mvargas@sparkventures.org)).



## SPARK 15: IT ALL BEGAN WITH A SPARK

### Celebratory Fall Gala breaks records

With our first ever hybrid event, the Spark Ventures community gathered both in-person and via Zoom to toast to 15 years of impact around the globe. Together we gathered more than 250 individuals and raised over \$310,000 in support of our mission to provide sustainable solutions to lift communities out of poverty and empower future leaders.

We are so grateful for our community's support. As co-founder, Scott Barbeau said at the event: "We believe that partnership is the way to go about this kind of work. We all have something to learn - and we all have something to give. And we thank you for giving Spark your trust and friendship on this journey. We are looking forward to the next 15 years as the legacy of that initial spark and its lasting impact continues. Thank you all!"



### WELCOMING TUMSHEEN QURESHI TO THE SPARK VENTURES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tumsheen is a Chicago-area resident who has over 15 years of experience in auditing, process improvement, and accounting. She has been a Spark Ventures supporter since 2019 and is eager to deepen her commitment and connection to our partners. She is taking her first trip with Spark to visit Entreamigos in Mexico, and will be lending some of her professional expertise to our Finance Committee.

Welcome Tumsheen!

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PO Box 641004, Chicago, IL 60664 | 773.293.6710  
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