REFLECTIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY

A Note from Michael Campbell, Spark Ventures Board Chair

At our recent Fall Gala, I was able to share some of the many ways your contributions have an incredible impact on the lives of the beneficiaries at each of our partners. Some of the examples that stand out the most to me are:

**INDIVIDUAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Pathways to self-sufficiency are being created for over 1000 people each year through access to education & jobs in Chicago, Mexico, Nicaragua and Zambia, AND through access to nutrition, vocational programming, healthcare and microloans in Zambia & Nicaragua.

**ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Revenue-generating initiatives like the artisan craft gallery in Mexico and the farm in Zambia are contributing hundreds of dollars each month to support the long term financial health of our partners.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Upcycling, recycling, advocacy, and the use of renewable resources are contributing to environmental sustainability.

Together, we are making a profound impact on the lives of those in need, and together, we are building strong foundations and bright futures for our friends around the world.

With gratitude,

Michael H. Campbell
In the vocational classes we offer, students learn skills that open up job opportunities and help entrepreneurs start their own businesses. Their income has a huge impact on financial and family sustainability, including a reduction in child labor as parents earn more and send their children to school. At Las Tías we say “no al trabajo infantil, ¡sí a la educación!” (no to child labor, yes to education!)

Students take these vocational courses for anywhere from 6 months to multiple years. Once they are able to demonstrate mastery of their skills, they officially graduate from the program. Support from the Spark community has allowed Las Tías to purchase graduation gifts that reward hard work and help individuals leverage their new skills into income generating businesses - i.e. sewing machines for the sewing class graduates and carpentry tools for the woodworking graduates.

When you step into the classroom at one of the vocational programs offered at Las Tías, you find young adults and women from the community who are enthusiastic about learning new skills and building financial resilience. These future bakers, beauticians and carpenters are investing in their own futures AND the future of their families, a fact highlighted by Candida Mendez, Co-founder & Executive Director of Las Tías when she spoke at our recent Fall Gala.

Vocational programs in Nicaragua provide long-lasting benefits to entire families.

CANDIDA MENDEZ
Executive Director, Las Tías (Nicaragua)
Everyday, I see the impact of our work. I’ve witnessed the expansion of personal goals and a greater willingness to contribute to the progress of the whole neighborhood. Thank you for helping We Grow Chicago empower our community! Please come visit the Peace Campus with Spark on May 4th for Unity Day! PEACE!

HEAVY CROWNZ
We Grow Chicago’s Peace Campus Director
At our Fall Gala, we were honored to continue the tradition of inducting new members into our Founders’ Circle - an award given to supporters who have achieved a significant lifetime giving milestone in contributions to our work.

In addition, this year we were pleased to add a new award category - the Strong Foundations Award. This award is given to recognize the commitment of foundations who have strengthened our impact and opened opportunities for hundreds of people.

The Fall Gala was a great success - with over 190 individuals in attendance, raising over $315,000 to support the bright futures of students around the globe. Thank you to those of you who were able to join our event, both in-person and virtually.