

sparkventures

FOUNDERS REPORT

Summer 2024



SPARK SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

A Note from Sue Bernstein, Spark Ventures Board Member

“What’d you do on your summer vacation?”

Personally, I can’t wait for the eight teachers we had on our July Zambia Impact Trip to return to their schools and have the students in their classrooms ask them that question. Their answers will be so rich with cultural exchange and new experiences. And thanks to plans for continued engagement, leveraging the technology investments we’ve made at Hope School, many of these teachers will be able to share glimmers of their summer experiences with their students as we continue to foster cross-cultural connections.

We are grateful to our traveling teachers for planning the engaging projects that our full group of travelers helped execute. From teaching about plant life to circuits... running classroom book clubs and discussion sessions, to teaching teachers new tricks for how to leverage their Chromebooks, the days in the classrooms at Hope Community School were quite packed. I hope you read on for more highlights about the trip - it was my 9th visit to Zambia, but there’s always something new to experience.

Also, read about what our partners around the globe have been up to this summer. They too are working hard to improve their communities.

INSIDE THIS EDITION...

Summer Highlights

A glimpse at exciting summer updates from Nicaragua, Mexico & Chicago

Zambia Trip Wrap-Up

18 travelers + incredible partners made the journey this July a huge success

Win a Trip to Zambia

Inspired by our Zambia trip highlights? Find out how you can secure a spot on a trip for just \$60

and more...



SUMMER SPOTLIGHTS

In this Founders Report issue, we're excited to bring you a comprehensive update from our journey to Zambia, but our partners around the globe have ALL been busy this summer - here are a few updates on how they have been supporting their communities.



Las Tías | NICARAGUA

Thanks to the generosity of the Spark Ventures community, this July we raised \$25,000 to support transportation scholarships as well as literacy and vocational training at Las Tías. When Las Tías wasn't able to support transportation scholarships, they saw student attendance at school and at the program dip dramatically - thankfully we can help ensure the young people in their programs have what they need to stay in school and keep learning.



Entreamigos | MEXICO

Jungle Group students embarked on an adventure to an Orchid Garden. They admired diverse kinds of orchids and learned about the trees that make up the lush jungle, some aging back hundreds of years. The journey ended at a breathtaking ocean viewpoint. This was an unforgettable day in nature, and it fits into a broader effort to inspire and motivate the students to continue to engage in the broader educational tutoring and guidance that happens in the Jungle Group program.



We Grow Chicago | WEST ENGLEWOOD

In a great moment for cross-collaboration between our partners, we were excited for Michelle "Chellee" Rashad, Executive Director of We Grow Chicago join us in Zambia: "Visiting Hope Community School in person was a powerful experience. I felt such solidarity with the team at Hope. While the challenges our communities face differ in important and subtle ways, our fundamental goal is the same: to provide love, support, resources, and opportunities for people to thrive, just like we do on We Grow Chicago's Peace Campus."



QUALITY CLASSROOM TIME IN ZAMBIA

Our impact travel experience to Hope Community School continues to evolve. With 8 teachers on this journey, we also programmed more time in the classrooms than on previous trips. Everyone benefited from this added time together.

Thanks to feedback from previous travelers, we knew that some of the most valuable and treasured time spent in Zambia is the time spent in the classrooms with kids from Hope Community School. This is something we have heard from travelers, but also from the teachers at Hope, who get immense value from watching and learning from the visitors who engage with their students in new and exciting ways. On this July trip the eight teachers who joined us built out lesson plans for multiple days worth of activities for all grade levels at Hope (from preschool through 11th grade). They came equipped to empower the rest of the travelers to take on some of these plans and step into the classrooms with activities all set up for them. Peeking your head into classrooms during our visit, you would have seen lessons on seed germination (with ziplock baggies taped to windows acting as mini greenhouses), computer lessons on typing and Word programs so students can better leverage the new IT investments at the school, counting activities with lots of new manipulatives in the preschool brought by teachers from Lincoln Park Preschool & Kindergarten, and so much more.

To support these lessons and contribute to the long-term educational resources at Hope, in addition to their own personal supplies, the travelers brought with them: 10 laptops, 4 mini PC's, hundreds of toothbrushes and toothpaste, all the lesson plans and supplies for 3 days of diverse Science, Math, and ELA activities for 550 learners, A Phonemic Awareness Lesson Plan Series, 100+ graph paper notebooks for 7th and 9th grade Science, 50 copies of "A Long Walk to Water," 125 picture books for classroom Book Clubs, donated clothing, soccer balls, backpacks... and on and on. Additionally, each Spark Impact Trip builds a donation to our host partner into the trip cost. With 18 travelers this time, we were able to present Hope with a new red generator and celebrate together during a ribbon-cutting ceremony. This gift was especially timely as Zambia, a country that is primarily run on hydroelectric power, is experiencing a severe drought and therefore suffering through extended power outages.

The impact of these trips in tangible and intangible contributions to Hope Community School is profound. Our travelers also walked away from the trip deeply moved and inspired by their time spent with our partners. Sarah Crawford, a teacher from Burr Elementary summed it up: "Teaching in Zambia this summer was an incredible and life-changing experience. Immersing myself in classrooms far from home and outside of my comfort zone was incredibly invigorating. I'm eager to share the experiences and insights I've gained with my students back home. We've already planned Zoom collaborations to keep this valuable exchange going into the upcoming school year!"

FALL GALA TICKETS NOW LIVE

Join us in October, and win a trip to Zambia in July!

JOINING HANDS TO UPLIFT & EMPOWER SPARK VENTURES FALL GALA

Thursday, October 17, 2024

Cafe Brauer - 2021 N Stockton Dr, Chicago

Tickets: \$250 for an individual, \$2000 for a table of 10

Get your ticket today: sparkventures.org/fallgala



Our Fall Gala is THE Spark Ventures event of the year. Always a lively and inspiring time, we promise you a room filled with energy and interesting fellow Spark supporters, good food and drinks, and a focused program that will highlight how your support is changing lives around the world.

This year's Fall Gala will feature a raffle for a trip to Zambia OR a \$4,500 trip credit for any Spark trip in the next two years (our next trip to Zambia is scheduled for July 13-22, 2025... get it on your calendar now!). Raffle tickets are \$60 for one ticket, or \$150 for three. These journeys are not your average vacation - they are so much more. The time in the classroom at Hope Community School is balanced with generous chunks of time spent with the Hope team and community - eating meals, catching up, and sharing stories. The deep relationships and friendships built on this trip are truly remarkable. Plus, there's always time saved for some of the excellent cultural and natural highlights Zambia has to offer! If you can't join us at the event, you can still enter the raffle here: sparkventures.org/fallgala



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