

# 20 20

# Annual Report



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## PRESENTED BY:

The SPARK Initiative Team



## Letter from the CEO

As an educational, non-profit organization with only 4.5 staff members and the state of mind of the world severely impacted by COVID-19, our focus on the well-being of young people grew even stronger this year. We became laser focused on shining a light on the SPARK inside the darkness. We were honored to see that effort amplified this year as we joined forces with organizations who share our belief of Speaking to the Potential, Ability, and Resilience inside of every Kid.

We found that when people see their resilience and the potential of their mind on an insightful level, something magical happens. Each time so-called “broken” and “hopeless” kids (and adults alike) have insight into their innate resilience, mental well-being, and potential, possibilities open up for them, their creative juices start flowing again, and they know how to solve their problems. They become leaders and mentors themselves.

We are so thankful to all the people and organizations that supported and partnered with us this year. More so, we are blessed and honored to be a small part of the beauty that unfolded right before us in 2020.

Love,  
Brooke Wheeldon-Reece

## ABOUT THE SPARK INITIATIVE

Our mission is to cultivate human potential and resilience through an understanding of the mind. We support our local and global community through education, mentoring and coaching.

We offer donated and paid services. The money we generate allows us to give back to our community in direct and tangible ways. Every dollar earned through the sale of our SPARK Mentoring Programs, and other services means that we are able to provide free services, support, and education to anyone in our local community under the age of 18. We also serve at-risk adults through local sex-trafficking survivor groups and criminal justice systems.

Our impact is further increased through donations, grant funding, and strategic partnerships.

## Values

### WE BELIEVE

- ...no-one is broken.
- ...in seeing the potential in everyone.
- ...we are all in it together.
- ...in respect and compassion.
- ...in honoring diversity and inclusion.
- ...possibilities are infinite.
- ...in transparency and communication.
- ...LOVE WINS!



# WHY MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION?

At The SPARK Initiative, we believe that the best form of prevention is through an education and insightful understanding of how the mind works and its implications on one's experiences.

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ACCOUNT FOR 16% OF THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE AND INJURY IN PEOPLE AGED 10-19 YEARS.

Globally, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents.

DEPRESSION IS THE 4TH LEADING CAUSE OF ILLNESS AND DISABILITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS AGED 15-19 YEARS & 15TH FOR THOSE AGED 10-14 YEARS.

Half of all mental health conditions start by age 14.

ANXIETY IS THE 9TH LEADING CAUSE FOR ADOLESCENTS AGED 15-19 YEARS AND 6TH FOR THOSE AGED 10-14 YEARS.

Emotional disorders can profoundly affect areas like schoolwork and school attendance. Social withdrawal can exacerbate isolation and loneliness. At its worse, depression can lead to suicide.

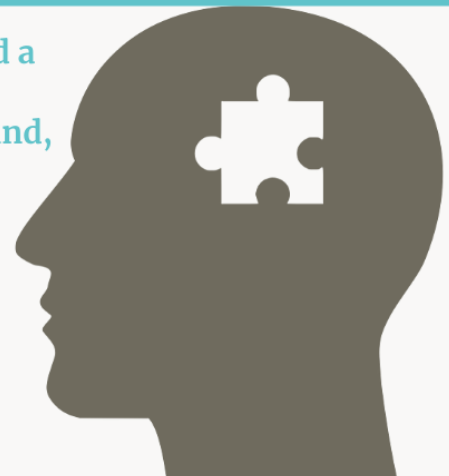
SUICIDE IS THE 3RD LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN 15-19-YEAR-OLDS.

## SPARK: Illuminating the Missing Piece of the Mental Health Puzzle



When people understand a few simple concepts regarding the human mind, they are proven to experience increased:

- Mental health
- Resilience
- Impulse control
- Compassion for others
- Communication skills
- Decision-making skills
- Problem-solving skills



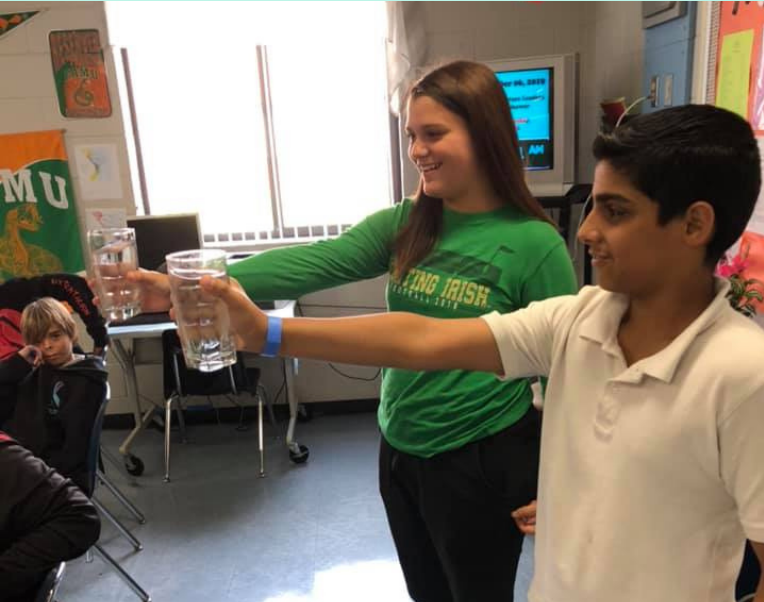
All of the programs and services at The SPARK Initiative shine a light on the Mental Health and Resilience already inside every human. Instead of focusing on what a person is lacking, we create a space for people to discover the resilience, well-being and potential already available to them.

Through this education, people become better equipped to navigate their circumstances and less likely to fall victim to the inner working of their feelings and emotions.



# Local Impact: Serving Youth & Our Community

(Greater Tampa, FL area)



In 2020, we focused our attention on our community's most vulnerable populations in ways that not only helped them thrive in the midst of temporary crisis but with education and donations that will support them in years to come.

**This year we provided local programming through:**

**SPARK Group Mentoring in schools and organizations**

**SPARK 1-on-1 Mentoring**

**Insight to Well-being Classes,  
and**

**Back to School Donations to both  
Teachers and Students.**



**"I am more goofy and more confident  
in myself."**

**"I have come to know the different  
realities of me and my friends."**

**"I have calmed down way more and that  
helped me because I don't take my anger  
out on people."**







The Spark Mentoring Programs, developed by the SPARK Initiative team, were created to promote resilience, mental well-being, emotional regulation, and pro-social behaviors, in the lives of our community's most vulnerable, at-risk students.



## SPARK Group Mentoring Programs

In 2020, our SPARK Group Mentoring Program served **245** students in:

- 7 elementary classes
- 4 middle school classes
- 1 youth residential drug treatment center
- 2 foster care, group home classes
- 1 juvenile jail class

## SPARK 1-on-1 Mentoring

While we offer free 1-on-1 mentoring year around to anyone 18 and under, in April 2020, we decided to lift the age requirement to reach those struggling with the dramatic shift in the world. For the next 4 months, while the world was in lockdown and struggling with the murder of George Floyd, we opened our mentoring and coaching services to any age, **free of charge**.

In 2020, our SPARK 1-on-1 Mentoring Program served a total of **45** people:

- 18 youth (18 and under)
- 27 adults (young adults, educators, and essential healthcare workers)

## Community Giving Highlights

Of the 15 SPARK Mentoring groups served:

11 were 100% donated by The SPARK Initiative.

The remaining 4 groups were 50% donated by The SPARK Initiative and 50% funded by the School District of Hillsborough County.

100% of the 45 SPARK 1-on-1 Mentoring was donated by The Spark Initiative.

# SPARK Mentoring Programs

## Research Highlights

An important part of the development of our programs is the rigorous research each program goes through to determine its effectiveness. In 2020, we focused our research efforts on our Elementary and Middle school programs. We are thrilled to announce that successful results came from both programs, officially making all of the SPARK programs, evidenced-based.

### Statistically significant positive changes students exposed to the SPARK Mentoring Programs:

#### Child Program

In mental well-being & understanding of how the mind works :

**91%**

(vs 45% the control group)

Less difficulty in regulating emotions (impulse control):

**83%**

(vs 38% the control group)

In communication, decision-making & problem-solving skills:

**89%**

(vs 62% the control group)

In resilience (compassion for others) – during tough circumstances:

**91%**

(vs 47% the control group)

In resilience (bounce back) – from tough circumstances:

**91%**

(vs 47% the control group)

#### Pre-Teen Program

In mental well-being & understanding of how the mind works :

**85%**

(vs 41% the control group)

Less difficulty in regulating emotions (impulse control):

**69%**

(vs 42% the control group)

In communication, decision-making & problem-solving skills:

**78%**

(vs 45% the control group)

In resilience (compassion for others) – during tough circumstances:

**78%**

(vs 49% the control group)

In resilience (bounce back) – from tough circumstances:

**78%**

(vs 49% the control group)

#### Teen Program

In mental well-being & understanding of how the mind works :

**72%**

(vs 32% the control group)

In resilience (bounce back) – from tough circumstances:

**66%**

(vs 26% the control group)

Less difficulty in regulating emotions (impulse control):

**72%**

(vs 28% the control group)

In communication, decision-making & problem-solving skills:

**67%**

(vs 26% the control group)

In resilience (compassion for others) – during tough circumstances:

**66%**

(vs 26% the control group)

### Other SPARK Mentoring Program, Research News:



**Kid tested. CASEL approved.**



Educating Hearts.  
Inspiring Minds.



On April 3, 2020, the SPARK Mentoring High School Program was accepted – as 1 of only 20 programs listed – for inclusion in CASEL's Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Programs.

This year we submitted 3 papers for publication. On November 26, 2020, our research was accepted for publication in the Journal of Psychology in the Schools.

1 down 2 to go...

26-Nov-2020

It is a pleasure to accept your manuscript entitled:

**"Social and Emotional Learning During Early Adolescence: Effectiveness of a Classroom-Based SEL Program for Middle School Students"**

for publication in Psychology in the Schools...

On behalf of the Editors of Psychology in the Schools, we look forward to your continued contributions to the Journal.

Sincerely,

Dr. David McIntosh

Editor in Chief, Psychology in the Schools

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a nationally recognized source for high-quality, evidence-based programs and resources.



# Insight to Well-Being

## A Program for the Criminal Justice System

The purpose of the Insight to Well-Being program is to transform the lives of adults and youth affected by the criminal justice system by pointing them to their innate resilience and well-being. This is taught through a compilation of sessions that speak to the potential, ability, and resilience inside every human.

*"I can be who I want to be when I don't dwell on my old thinking. My past doesn't define me."*

*"My SPARK is who I am in God's eyes."*

*"I'm starting to have more better days than sad days."*

### In 2020, The Insight to Well-Being Program was taught to:

- 23 women in a Tampa jail (12 weekly sessions).
- 52-weekly sessions in a local safe house for sex-trafficking survivors (estimated 100 women).

*"I haven't let my thoughts manifest like I use to."*

### Community Giving Highlights

- 12 weekly sessions in the Tampa jail were 50% donated by The SPARK Initiative, and 50% funded by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's office.
- 100% of the 52 weekly sessions were donated by The Spark Initiative.

*"Thank you for sharing your insight. My inner SPARK is brighter."*

In 2020, after years of seeing incredible results in our separate communities, the Insight to Well-Being curriculum was created in partnership with 2 other non-profit organizations, Beyond Recovery (UK) and The Insight Alliance (Portland, OR). Its release to the public is planned for April 2021.

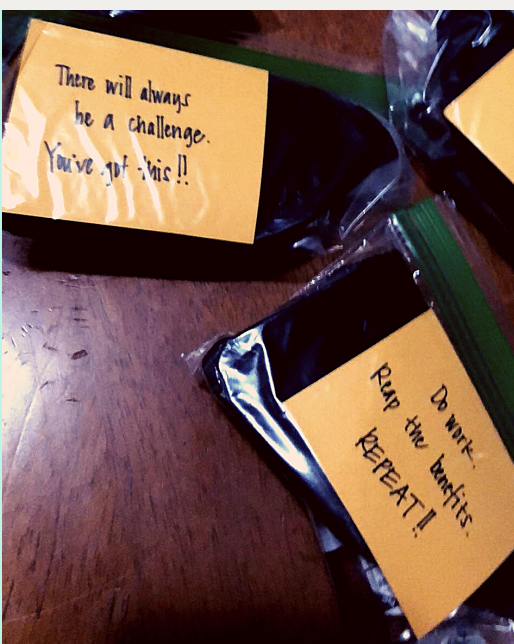


Brooke Wheeldon-Reece, The SPARK Initiative, Anna Debenham, The Insight Alliance, Jacqueline Hollows, Beyond Recovery, Ashley Hunt, The SPARK Initiative

# SPARKING Hope as Schools Reopened

As schools began to reopen in the fall, the SPARK Initiative team was eager to be a part of the celebration and ease the stress of anxious teachers and students, even if it had to be from the sidelines. COVID still a concern, we knew it would be months before we could be back in the classroom with the students. So, instead we planned a massive, surprise giveaway. We choose 2 unsuspecting teachers and filled their classrooms with materials. We also partnered with the Andrew Joseph Foundation, Sis, Se Puede and Black Lives Matter Tampa and donated to their Back 2 Learning, Drive Thru School Giveaway Event.

## Community Giving Highlights



### To the Back 2 Learning Event, SPARK Donated:

100 reusable children's masks  
200 pens  
824 pencils  
60 backpacks  
50 glue sticks  
125 bottles of hand sanitizer



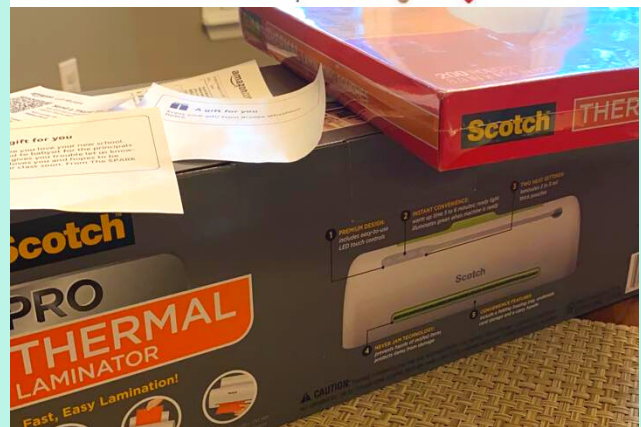
Thank you Thank you Thank you [Brooke Wheeldon-Reece](#) & The S.P.A.R.K Initiative!!! 🎉  
👍 Feeling so very blessed with my delivery today!  
🙏 This is def going to help this 2nd Grade teacher and in turn help the students of this teacher! So very very grateful! ❤️❤️



### To local teachers, SPARK Donated:

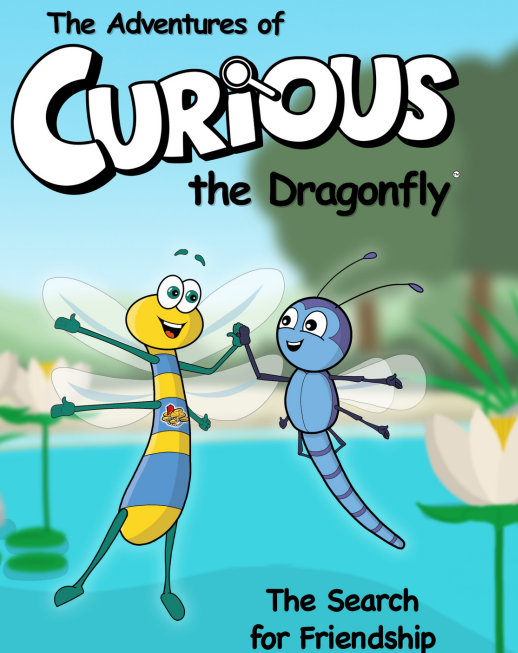
30 clipboards  
52 whiteboard markers  
40 lbs. of copy paper  
(8,000 sheets)  
24 pencil pouches  
contactless thermometer  
laminator  
200 laminating pouches

High stress this morning getting Luke online, waiting for Eliza's computer to boot up (it's old and slow) and fielding my own student's confused emails and messages. The kids begged me to open this package that arrived THIS MORNING, thinking it was something for them. To my surprise, it was this sweet gift from [Brooke Wheeldon-Reece](#) from the #FindTheSpark Initiative. This brought me to instant tears, and brought back so many happy and fun memories from having [Ashley Hunt](#) in my class. I truly appreciate this generous gift. ❤️ I don't know how to use this machine right now, but I'm promise to make the best use of this to help our kids. 🙏 and ❤️





# Reaching Beyond Our Community



## SPARK Mentoring Program 2020 Highlights

- Created & introduced our newly developed, SPARK Mentoring Program for Young Children, ages 5-8.
- Completely revised our SPARK Child Program for ages, 8-10.
- Developed 42 ready-made virtual lessons for educators to use in an on-line learning environment.
- Created new parent resources, including lesson letters & activities for home. As well as, a fully virtual parenting course.
- Began expansion of the SPARK programs language availability from English to also include Spanish & Hebrew.
- Expanded global network of SPARK-certified facilitators by 96 people working in 12 countries.
- Expanded organizational partnerships to include 22 organizations working in education, mental health, mentoring, & social services.

Find your Spark!

Encuentra tú Spark!

תמצא את ה'צ' שלך



**SPARK**

ONLINE PARENTING PROGRAM

# New SPARK in 2020

## Creation of New & Updated SPARK Mentoring Programs for Children



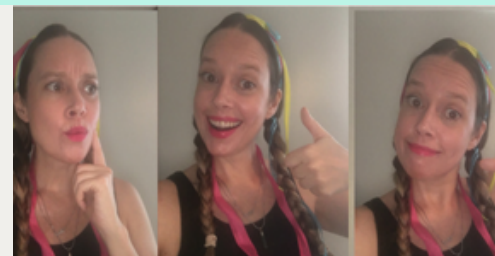
"Curious is going to help people be kind and find their Spark in their heart. All around the world."

This year we created a SPARK Mentoring program specifically for **young children, ages 5-8** & we completely revamped our **child program for ages 8-10**. We teamed up with Stephanie Fox, creator of The Adventures of Curious the Dragonfly (now an official member of the SPARK team) & developed both programs around Curious and his friends. Both programs are now packed full of games, songs, & opportunities to get silly. They are currently being enjoyed by children all over the globe! Special thanks to Nicole Montgomerie in Southern Australia who piloted both programs! The artwork seen here is from a student of hers.

## Creation of Virtual Learning Lessons

Like so many other education providers, when COVID-19 hit, we had to pivot & invest resources in adopting to the new reality of online learning. We thoughtfully scanned our curricula & completed an analysis of those activities that would be the most challenging for educators to provide in a virtual environment.

We then **created 42 ready-made video lessons** that can be uploaded & played by screen sharing on any virtual platform! These activities can stand on their own or be used as a launching pad for a more expanded lesson.



Miss Stephanie in character for the young child video lessons!



## Expansion into Other Languages

Find your Spark!

Encuentra tú Spark!

תמצא את הִבִּיצ'ן שלך

In order to make our curriculum more accessible to all youth, we began an expansion into other languages. We now have student-facing materials in **Spanish** for all four curricula.

Additionally, we are very grateful to Aviva Pashchur who is translating our curricula to **Hebrew**! We are inspired by her initiative & dedication to help equip the next generation of Israelis with key knowledge to be a powerful force for peace & well-being in Israel & beyond.

Toda rabah ve mazal tov!



# New Parent Resources



We are continually thinking about how to improve our services. In this spirit, we launched our on-line parenting course to help parents understand:

1. **What's really going on** when we feel disconnected from & frustrated with our kids.
2. **Resilience** & what this means for trauma, anxiety, depression, divorce, self-esteem, & destructive behavior.
3. How **state of mind** affects our access to mental resources, clarity, confidence, & capacity as parents.

We were delighted to support **34 parents** during this 6-week self-study course where we hosted weekly webinars to answer questions & learn from each other.

## SPARK Parenting Course Testimonials

“It is hard to put into words what I learnt from the parenting course, but it feels special. It gave me a clearer sense of what my role is as a parent, and what it's not. My role is not to mold my daughter into the person I think she should be, but rather to give her room to develop in her own way on her own timeline.... Appreciating & enjoying her as she shows up is one of the best ways I can give her permission to be true to herself, and live life to the full, knowing that she can trust in the power of love and common sense within herself....Allowing my feelings of anger & frustration to be present without judging myself helps these emotions to flow through more quickly.

One of the biggest things I learnt on the course is that learning to parent well is about my own growth. If I take care of myself and live from a place of wellbeing, parenting is relatively easy, and so much more fulfilling than when my focus is on trying to fix or control my daughter. I'm grateful to Spark for putting this course together, and to the teachers for sharing in such a heartfelt and honest way about their own experiences. I would highly recommend the course to anyone who wants to struggle less with parenting.”

- Maria, Parenting Course Participant

“During my years of "hands on" parenting, I spent a lot of time questioning myself, and feeling like I didn't know what I was doing. I had a shelf of parenting books that I thought had all the answers. Spark's approach to parenting is powerful ...Understanding how our experience is working enables us to relax & enjoy our children more- and trust that we have the innate resources & guidance we need to parent them in the best way possible. I wish I had been able to take a course like this when my children were very young-it is the kind of information that is applicable through all stages of parenting-I'm benefiting from it now with my adult children!”

- Helen, Parenting Course Participant

## Special Thank You to Julie Brown- Co Creator of the SPARK Parenting Program



Julie has been apart of SPARK since it's first edition of the Teen Curriculum's release. She has been on all of SPARK's trainings and is a Certified SPARK Trainer for the UK. Julie worked with Brooke and Ashley to create the content in our parenting course. She also helped to facilitate the beta program and the final program's live webinars. Julie is an amazing partner, facilitator and friend! **Thank you Julie, from the bottom of our hearts. You are deeply appreciated!**

## Monthly Parent Webinars & SPARK Letters to Home

In October, we launched our **monthly parent webinars**, open to any parents whose children are going through the SPARK curricula. Facilitators are welcome to invite parents to join & learn more about what their children are learning in a safe, non-judgmental space to receive any support they may feel they need.

To help foster a supportive environment, **letters for each of the 65 lessons** within our four curricula were created. Facilitators, whether it's a teacher, school counselor, or mentor, can edit these letters as needed and send home with their students to share what was learned that day, the activities used, and ways learning can be reinforced at home.

# EXPANSION OF THE CERTIFIED SPARK FACILITATOR NETWORK



In 2020, we expanded our global network of Certified SPARK facilitators by 96 people working in 12 countries.

US  
UK  
Israel  
Sweden  
Norway  
New Zealand  
Australia  
Norway  
Croatia  
Netherlands  
Spain  
India

To become a certified facilitator, curriculum holders participate in 3-4-day training where we:

- Explore the foundations of the SPARK curriculum.
- Observe how that foundation is translated into age-appropriate lessons and activities.
- Practice delivering the lessons to each other.
- Share best practices and lessons learned.

This year, we facilitated 14 such trainings, 3 open to all curriculum holders and 11 private trainings for partner organizations working in foster care, juvenile justice systems, schools, after-school programs, mentoring, and youth-led social change.



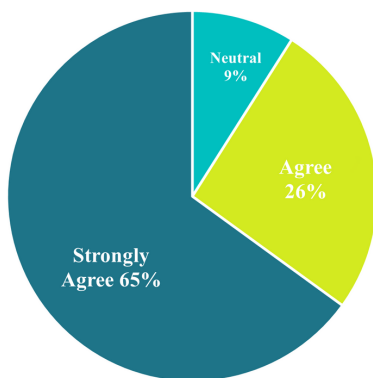
# What Certified SPARK Facilitators are Saying...



The most valuable aspect of the training was...

- 💚 practicing the lessons/working through the lessons together (most common answer)
- 💚 seeing all the different ways you can teach the concepts
- 💚 really understanding the foundational concepts and the impact such an understanding has on myself and kids.
- 💚 falling into my Spark and understanding my habitual thinking
- 💚 the educator's professionalism, warmth, creativity, and patience.

I feel confident in my capacity to implement the SPARK program



## SPARK Facilitators in their Own Words...

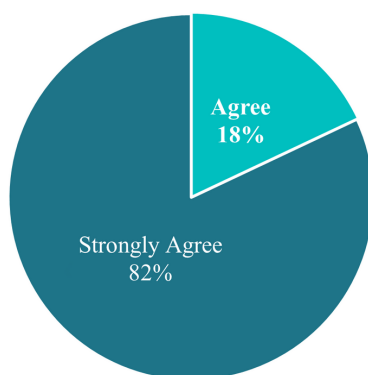
***"All in all, very interesting and motivational. I haven't written that many notes since high school! There was so much inspiration and small insights popping in during these days, I wanted to keep them! I can't wait to start, even though I also understood how much I still have to learn! Thank you very much!"***

**– SPARK Facilitator, Norway**

***"Amazing experience!"***

**– SPARK Facilitator, Croatia**

The training met my expectations



***"I am confident that this training is a BLAST in person. Due to COVID-19 our training was online and our SPARK hosts did an excellent job of adapting to this. I was very impressed with how knowledgeable my hosts were. Thank you all."***

**– SPARK Facilitator/mental health professional, NC, USA**

## Monthly Facilitator Webinars

One piece of feedback we received was that our facilitators would like more opportunities to learn from each other and more time spent with us. Therefore, in the fall, we started holding monthly facilitator webinars where we do exactly that. Personal and group follow-up, to explore how to expand and deepen our impact in the lives of young people is a priority for 2021.

# Partnerships

## SPARK Mentoring Program Partners

*This game-changing understanding we teach resulted in us expanding our organizational partnerships to include 22 new organizations working in the fields of education, mental health, mentoring, and social services. We are delighted and honored that these organizations saw the potential in a partnership and took the plunge.*



### Schools

**(public, private, charter, alternative, psychiatric):**

- ♥ Arleen Joint School – Montana
- ♥ Nelson County Schools – Kentucky
- ♥ Pickerington Alternative School – Ohio
- ♥ Center Joint Unified School District – Antelope, CA
- ♥ Alexander County School – Taylorsville, NC
- ♥ William B Orenic Intermediate School – Illinois
- ♥ Wasatch High School Alternative- Heber City, UT
- ♥ Green Dot Public Schools – Los Angeles, CA
- ♥ St. Mary's County Public Schools - Maryland
- ♥ South Madison Community School – Indiana
- ♥ Riverbend Cherry Hospital - Greensboro, NC

### Social Services Organizations

- ♥ Children's Home Society - Jacksonville, FL
- ♥ Gulf Coast Social Services – Houma, LA
- ♥ Family and Youth Initiative - New Carlisle, OH
- ♥ Crossroads Child and Family Services - Fort Wayne, IN
- ♥ EMBARC Iowa Refugee Mentoring – Waterloo, IA
- ♥ True to Life Foundation – Chicago, IL

### Mentoring Organizations / After-School Clubs:

- ♥ Boys and Girls Club – Garden Grove, CA
- ♥ She Rises, Inc – Washington DC Metro area
- ♥ First and Goal, Inc. – Houston, TX
- ♥ Rebels for Peace – Chicago, Illinois
- ♥ Communities in Schools - Lubbock, TX

*We are so excited about each and everyone of you. As we enter 2021, may we all commit ourselves to continuous learning and a true partnership to realize the potential that we know exists.*



# Partnerships

## Additional SPARK Initiative Partners

### SEL Providers Council

In May, we joined this association that brings together providers of SEL programs, curricula, and assessments for collective learning, thought leadership, and action. We also assumed a role on their Advocacy Committee where we work with a small group of SEL providers to advocate for policies and funding that support universal access to high-quality SEL both in and out of school time settings for young people and the adults in their lives.



### Boost Collaborative

The BOOST Collaborative provides no-cost resources to support the community with relevant, timely, and easy-to-implement skills and tools. In November, SPARK's CEO, Brooke Wheeldon-Reece and Director of Program Development, Ashley officially partnered with Boost as Legacy Trainers for their annual Legacy Summits.

### IOS Collective

The IOS Collective is composed of 3 different non-profit organizations (The Insight Alliance, One Solution and The SPARK Initiative) with the same mission: uncovering the capacity of our mind to create individual, community, and systemic change. We have been working together the past few years as a way to elevate our grassroots efforts in order to create a large-scale impact. The IOS collective was founded on the idea that what we can do alone is nothing compared to what we can do together. We spent 2020 designing the **Global Change Incubator**, which is set to launch in 2021. The **Global Change Incubator** is a 10-month, in-depth educational leadership experience developed specifically for current and aspiring leaders of social, environmental, and systemic change.



# Global Community Outreach

As part of our community giving, we also focused our efforts on our Global Community. Following are some of the workshops and speaking engagements we donated to the education and social services community over the past year.

## Boost Collaborative (Café)

BOOST Café is the most comprehensive online community for in and out-of-school time educators. The BOOST Café is an extension of the Collaborative and provides no-cost resources to support the community with relevant, timely, and easy-to-implement skills and tools. In July, we hosted our first workshop to their members. We look forward to continued collaboration with this inspiring organization.



## Life 2.0 Conference

In June, at the height of racial tensions and protests, we had the privilege of hosting the youth track at the global conference, Life 2.0: A Simpler Life Through an Understanding of the Mind. With our partners, Rebels for Peace, we were able to have a profound discussion about social injustice and racism, in a deeper way that explored what these differences are actually made of. This exploration left the audience hopeful that social issues are actually solvable when looking towards our own minds. You can listen here: <https://the.3pconference.live/spark-initiative/>



## National Alternative Education Association

We were honored to sponsor and participate in virtual school visits in association with our partners at the National Alternative Education Association. We were inspired to hear insights from educators and administrators at alternative schools and also share our own experience with them.



## Boys & Girls Club

We were invited to host a workshop for over 200 young leaders of the Boys & Girls Clubs in Garden Grove, CA. What 1 participant had to say:

"I am on course to teach high school English in a few years and I plan to teach this to my students. The lessons you presented today really spoke to my heart. I took notes on absolutely everything because I want to use them. I want to show them to everyone. I wish I had learned about it when I was younger. Thank you so much for the amazing training."



## Eastern Mediterranean International School

Based in the Middle East, this school is making education a force for peace and sustainability. We designed & hosted a workshop on mediation in conflict contexts. Our diverse group of participants used their newly acquired skills in listening, problem-solving, & separate realities to agree upon a history curriculum in a conflict context. No small task but we made progress!



# Global Community Outreach

**NYAR**



## National Youth-At-Risk

Brooke and Ashley presented at the annual National Youth At-Risk Conference in Savannah, GA this past March. Little did they know, this conference would be the last live presentation they would do in 2020!

The SPARK Initiative will be presenting once again at this annual conference, only this time it will be virtually!

You can learn more about The National Youth-At-Risk and how to attend here: <https://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ce/conferences/nationalyouthatrisk/>

## Pennsylvania State University

We also addressed a group of Education and Psychology students at Penn State University. We wish all university students in these fields would learn the foundational concepts of the human experience that this group is exploring. We know it would be a game-changer. Many thanks to our curriculum developer, Shifra Chesler for organizing the event and for her profound work in this university.



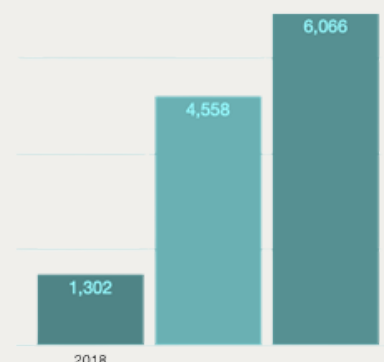
## Additional Educational Outreach

In 2020, we also sponsored and/or exhibited at 4 additional conferences where more than 6,000 participants attended.

- The American School Counselor Association annual conference entitled One Vision, One Voice (July)
- Arkansas Alternative Educators Conference (July)
- The California Association of School Counselors conference entitled Evolution: Equity, Disparities, and Student Mental Health (October)
- The Florida School Counselors Association (November)

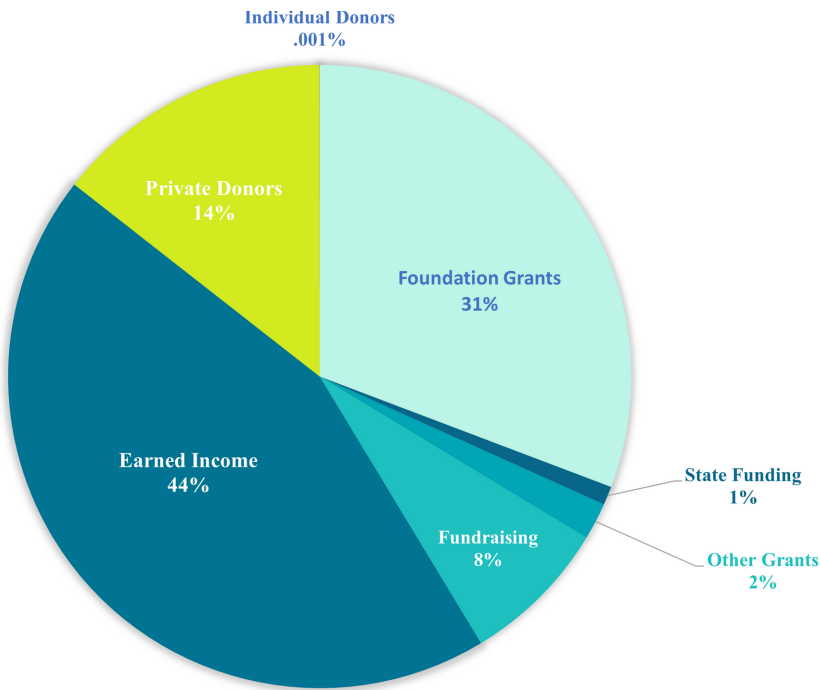
## Podcast

Our weekly Find Your Spark podcast has more than quadrupled its downloads since its first broadcast in August 2018 and increased its downloads by 33% in the last year. Listeners tuned in from 49 US States and 59 countries: the UK, Australia, Canada, and Norway the most common. This informal, laid-back, and fun podcast shares real-life stories of realizing the potential and impact of your SPARK in the middle of a busy life. A couple of our most popular episodes include the Parenting Series, A Teen's Perspective on Growing Up with Your SPARK, and Feeling Left Out.



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## 2020 REVENUE



## REVENUE VS. EXPENSES

Self-Sufficiency Ratio  
(% of operating expenses that are covered by earned income)  
**51%**

Percent of Budget for Staff  
**45%**

Percent of Direct Administrative Costs (Overhead)  
**10%**

Current Assets Above Current Liabilities  
**238%**

Months of Reserves  
**6 months**

## 2020 COVID IMPLICATIONS

Due to the global shutdown, many programs and subsequent contracts were cancelled and/or postponed.

In total, The SPARK Initiative did not receive or had to defer, \$67,450 in planned funding for 2020.

However, our donations, services and commitment to our community never waiverd.



# 15%

Increased earned income ratio by 15% in 2020

# 7%

Increased fundraising ratio by 7% in 2020



# Our Supporters and Donors

## GRANTS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

- Community Foundation of Tampa Bay
- Risser Family Foundation
- FACTS Engineering
- Hillsborough County Nonprofit Safety Net Program
- Gannett Foundation's A Community Thrives
- Julie Weintraub's Hands Across the Bay
- Hillsborough County School District's Project Promise



Julie Weintraub's  
Hands Across the Bay



**a community thrives®**  
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



## FUNDRAISERS & INDIVIDUAL DONORS

In 2020 The SPARK Initiative held 2 fundraisers. Combined, we were blessed to be supported by nearly 600 individual donors.

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR  
2020 TOP (PUBLIC) INDIVIDUAL  
DONORS AND SUPPORTERS**

Bud Risser  
Ronald McVety  
Bruce Mitchell  
Cally Bekhor  
Roxanne Ray  
Lynne Robertson  
Michael Neill  
Reed Fischbach  
Barbara Extejt  
David Brandon  
Emmanuel Lelekis  
Dicken Bettinger  
Eirik & Mara Gleason  
Anna Debenham  
John Wheeldon  
Julie Brown  
Jackie Whitt  
Jacqueline Hollows

# 45K

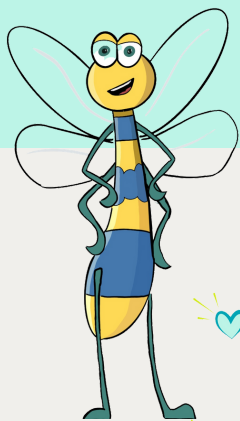
Because of donors and supporters like you, we raised over 45k for our 2021 SPARKING Change Youth Leadership Program

# #04

Out of 572 national non-profit organizations, The SPARK Initiative got the most individual donors in a 1 week period.

# 113%

2020 was a difficult year but our supporters showed true generosity. We increased our individual donors by 113% from last year.



# Curious About Our 2021 Plans?

## Priorities for 2021:

- 💡 Get far more curious & connected with those we serve.
- 💡 Expand & deepen our understanding of our community's most pressing social issues.
- 💡 Become an increasingly diverse board and team by fostering the learning and growth of the youth we work with, with the intention of creating leadership roles for them in 2022.
- 💡 Foster ongoing learning and connection between our community partners and the youth we serve.
- 💡 Deepen existing partnerships with youth-focused organizations and explore new ones.
- 💡 Expand the presence and reach of The SPARK Initiative in the fields of education, mental health, mentoring, and social change.
- 💡 Facilitate the translation of our programs into different languages in order to reach more people.

## LAUNCHING IN 2021

### **The SPARKING CHANGE Youth Leadership Program**

The SPARK's newest initiative, The SPARKING CHANGE Youth Leadership Program, will begin in January 2021. This year-long, intensive and immersive internship program will gather young change-makers to form a strong coalition for positive, sustainable change in their community. Our goal is to help these future change-makers understand their own mental health and well-being, while providing the knowledge and tools to create their own initiative for a positive difference in their community.

Throughout the year, the internship will guide and support each chosen intern in learning about the power of their mind and resilience, and culminate in launching their own initiative.





# Meet the Team



**Brooke Wheeldon-Reece**

Fun Fact: 16 years in prevention education, Has 5 kids, 3 of which were adopted from foster care.



**Ashley Hunt**

Fun Fact: Background in Elementary Education, Co-Creator of the SPARK Mentoring Programs



**Nicole Wilson**

Fun Fact: Background in After School Care, Hair Stylist & Makeup Artist by Trade.



**Jena Travise**

Fun Fact: Served in the US Air Force, Manages a local youth soccer league.



**Stephanie Fox**

Fun Fact: Worked for the UN with Palestine Refugees, creator of Curious the Dragonfly.

## Board of Directors

**Cally Bekhor - Chairman of the Board**

**Bruce Mitchell - Treasurer**

**Ron McVety - Board Member**

**\*Carissa Barney - Board Member**

\*Resigned during 2020