

S P A R K

2007 Annual Report

Spark's Mission

Spark inspires middle-school youth to pursue their interests, create bonds with their communities, and develop a lifelong passion for learning. To that end, Spark operates summer and after-school programs that match students with apprenticeships in professions of their choice at local workplaces.

Spark was founded in 2004 by Chris Balme and Melia Dicker. Balme and Dicker envisioned a program that would enable students to become active participants in the learning process, be able to pursue a personal interest, and see the relevance of their education. They believed every community has tremendous untapped resources in the form of local adults who are willing to share their skills with interested students. Spark is the product of this vision, and aspires to strengthen the community in two ways: by helping youth become motivated learners and connected community members, and encouraging adults to nurture the next generation through mentoring and volunteerism.





Dear Friends,

Spark's community of students, parents, teachers, volunteers, donors and staff has taken amazing strides over the past year. In 2007, we served 60 students in Redwood City, matching each with an empowering one-on-one apprenticeship. Now, as we enter 2008, we expect to serve 132 students in Redwood City and San Francisco, supported by a network of over 250 volunteers. Spark is fast becoming an established and sustainable organization, able to help increasing numbers of students find confidence, engagement and motivation through apprenticeships and leadership training.

More important than statistics are the stories we hear from youth and their mentors demonstrating the impact of Spark's work. We hear of Alex, who has always dreamed of becoming a police officer and now has a devoted mentor in the Redwood City Police Department. Through a semester of intensive, hands-on learning, the idea of police work has gone from fantasy to reality for Alex. With the support of his mentor, he now knows dedication and education will help him achieve his dream.

Some students learn their apprenticeship field is fascinating but want to keep exploring other options, and we celebrate that as well. Jessica began an apprenticeship in fashion wanting to be a model and had a wonderful time learning the details of modeling (lesson: it's not as easy as it looks!). When she joined Spark for a second session, however, she had a clear sense of wanting to try something vastly different than modeling. Jessica chose to do an apprenticeship in immigration law, and continues to care passionately about that field.

These stories remind us of the heart of the program: when you create real-world opportunity for students to pursue their learning interests, their natural curiosity, enthusiasm and motivation come alive. This is what motivates the many dedicated volunteers whose time and energy make the apprenticeships possible. This is what inspires the donors, from individuals to foundations to local companies, whose financial support allows us to serve rapidly increasing numbers of youth.

It has been a wonderful year of growth and learning, with students whose energy, imagination and drive continue to inspire us all. Here's to an amazing year ahead, and to the growth and impact we can create together.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Balme". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Chris Balme
Executive Director



“Working with Spark has not only changed my life, but I feel like the community is giving back to me. These kids need to be heard and they need people to listen to them as individuals.”

Gigi Gaggero, of Kids Culinary Adventures, speaks about mentoring Kelly, a graduate of Spark’s Fall, 2007, program.

program

Spark students are asked to identify their top three apprenticeship choices when applying, and nearly all students are matched with their first choice. A leadership curriculum, taught in small staff-lead groups, complements the apprenticeship component and helps students realize their potential in both school and their personal lives. Students also participate in workshops and that introduce them to a range of career possibilities, from a microbiologist introducing students to her daily work in the laboratory, to a sushi chef sharing his culinary abilities. A critical component of the program entails students’ participation in interactive tours of local companies and nonprofits like Google and TechShop, learning how these organizations operate, and how to become involved in each industry. Finally, students get to know their community better by going on a “Community Quest,” during which they identify local resources by interviewing local businesses and community members.

While working with Gigi at Kid’s Culinary Adventures, Kelly learned how chocolate is made and served up handmade truffles at Discovery Night, Spark’s graduation ceremony. Cameron apprenticed with a train conductor, Bruce Shelton, and took trips up and down California while learning all about trains. Meteorologists Bob Cohen and Bruce Bingaman taught Grace how to transmit official forecasts over the newswire at the National Weather Service.

Professional evaluations indicate students graduate from Spark with increased confidence, a greater awareness of community resources, and a renewed motivation that manifests in academic success. They also develop lasting positive relationships with supportive adults. Many of these relationships have continued beyond the apprenticeship, leading to volunteer, and even paid work, opportunities.

Spark expanded from one to two school sites in 2007, and increased its annual enrollment to 60 students. Spark offers both summer and after-school sessions, allowing 7th and 8th grade students to sign up for one or more sessions. As Spark grows, this unique experience is being offered to more and more students, growing from 11 students in 2005, to 26 students in 2006, 60 students in 2007, and an estimated 132 students in 2008.

“We have been looking at how trains work and what jobs the crew performs, and I’ve been learning about how the equipment works, like the signals and control towers . . . Since Bruce is also an avid train fan, we can really relate to each other.”

Cameron, a graduate of Spark’s Fall, 2007, program, learned about trains from his mentor, Bruce Shelton, a Caltrain conductor.

spark program components

Apprenticeships: Each student is matched with an apprenticeship in her/his field of interest and works one-on-one or two-on-one with a mentor. Together, they complete a hands-on “Discovery Project” which gives the student a meaningful work experience in that field. During Discovery Night, students present this project to an audience of peers and community members.

Workshops & Field Trips: Spark invites professionals to lead workshops in order to share their career experience and skills. One workshop involved the head of the local forensics laboratory describing his forensics career, and students dusted the school for fingerprints during one workshop. Another day, a city council member described how local government works and asked students to re-write the city budget according to their priorities. Workshops and field trips allow students to explore the range of possibilities available to them within their own communities, while simultaneously building connections that may be helpful in the future.

Leadership Training: Weekly staff-led groups support students as they complete their apprenticeships and reflect on the experiences of working in a professional setting. Personality assessments and team-building games provide an opportunity for students to discover their interests and talents, as well as set meaningful personal goals. Students also learn how to identify resources in their community by completing informational interviews during “Community Quest” scavenger hunts.



Increasing Awareness



Melia Dicker addresses the audience at Spark's 1st Annual Dream Builders Breakfast at Provident Credit Union.

spark in the spotlight

This has been an exciting year of outreach and exposure for Spark! We hosted two inaugural events, our Dream Builders Breakfast and Sugar Rush, launched a new website and blog, and created Spark's own online social network. By the end of 2007, our quarterly newsletter was reaching over 1,000 families and our website was receiving nearly 400 hits per month. We are excited to have connected with so many people and inspired new Spark advocates!



spark's newest website

www.sparkprogram.org

October brought the launch of our website's fresh new look. With nearly 100 interactive and dynamic pages, the website allows visitors increased access to in-depth information about Spark. Students and their parents can download an application, Dream Builders Breakfast attendees can RSVP online, and donations can be made with the simple click of a mouse. Our website visitors can also enjoy our Spark stories detailing various apprenticeships. We invite you to explore our online videos and blog!

spark's social networks

sparkprogramvc.ning.com

sparkapprenticeships.ning.com

We also created the Spark Volunteer Corps, an online social network dedicated to providing a forum for past, present and future volunteers. The site connects our volunteers interested in sharing their knowledge, professional network, and Spark experiences with each other. It also serves as a useful tool for attracting and introducing prospective volunteers to our community. Sparkprogramvc.ning.com also allows us to easily send messages to our Volunteer Corps when the need arises.

Our apprentices and apprentice teachers can also communicate with each other online by writing blog posts at the end of each meeting to reflect on the day's activities. Sparkapprenticeships.ning.com also enables Spark staff to send messages to program participants, and students and teachers to leave messages for one another.





Ashley Quintana, a 2005 Spark graduate, and Memo Morantes, member, San Mateo County Board of Education, pose at the Dream Builders Breakfast.

dream builders breakfast

2007 featured Spark's 1st Annual Dream Builders Breakfast in Redwood City. Emceed by Spark Board Member Alicia Ross, Dream Builders is an opportunity for Spark enthusiasts to introduce friends and colleagues to Spark over breakfast. Angela Brassinga, parent of a 2006 Spark graduate, moved the audience by describing the positive impact Spark had on her son, Andrew. We also had the opportunity to hear from Jan Christensen, Superintendent of the Redwood City School District, and Ashley Quintana, a 2005 Spark graduate.



photo: Shu-Jon Mao

Michael Mina's pastry chefs prepare Basil Milk Chocolate S'mores with Pistachio Puree at Spark's 1st Annual Sugar Rush.

spark's sweet fundraiser

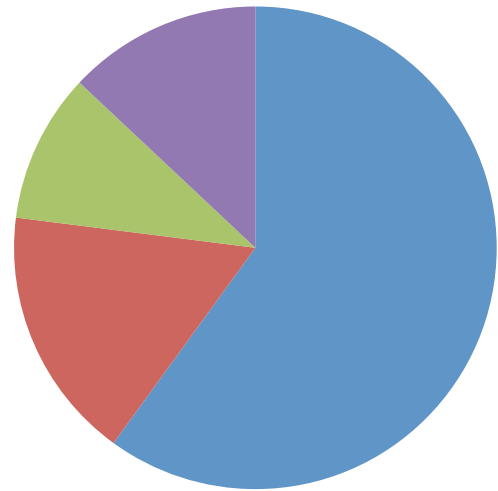
Spark rounded off 2007 with our 1st Annual Sugar Rush in San Francisco. The event was filled to capacity and wildly successful! Sugar Rush featured a host of auction items and unlimited dessert tastings served up by many of the Bay Area's best restaurants, bakeries and chocolatiers, including:

- A16
- Bi-Rite Creamery and Bakery
- Boulevard
- Claire's Squares
- Coco-luxe Confections
- Delfina
- Jardiniere
- Michael Mina
- Michael Misher Chocolates
- Patisserie Philippe
- Range
- Scott Howard
- SPQR
- Truffles Gateaux
- Two
- XOX Truffles

Student Demographics

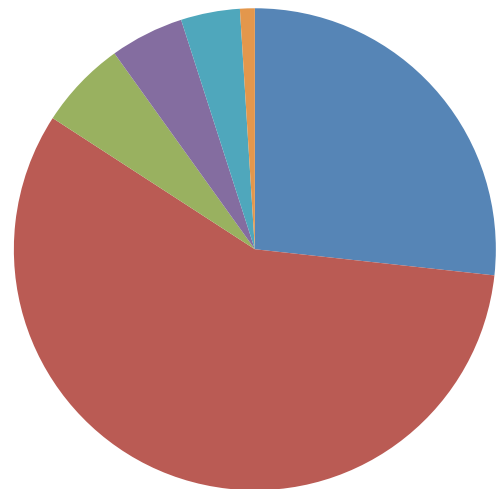
Income Level

- 60% poverty level
- 17% low income
- 10% middle Income
- 13% upper-middle income



Ethnic Background

- 4% African American
- 6% Asian
- 27% Caucasian
- 58% Hispanic
- 1% Native American
- 5% Pacific Islander



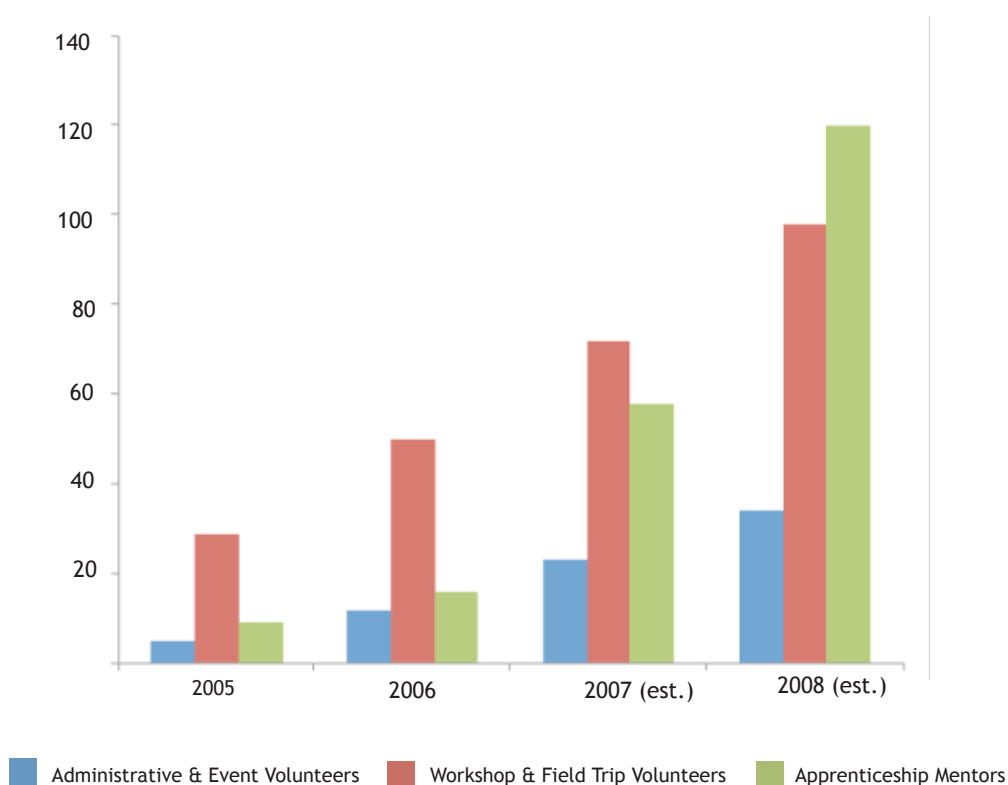
Volunteer Involvement

Our volunteers are generous community members who share their skills and professional workplace with an interested young person; schools often do not have the time or resources to help youth create learning opportunities in workplaces, yet these can be among the most valuable experiences in a young person's education. This is where Spark makes a difference, creating apprenticeships that help students pursue a personal learning interest through a hands-on project.

The result of this learning connection is an engaging and frequently life-changing experience for both parties. For most new mentors, a Spark apprentice is the first student they have invited into their workplace. In the process of sharing their work lives, these volunteers reconnect with youth in their communities; by showing they care enough to share their experience, knowledge, and time, mentors have an immediate positive impact on their apprentices. In addition, mentors often report the experience offers a refreshing new perspective on their own work life. The relationship frequently endures beyond the conclusion of the Spark apprenticeship, providing valuable support that may later help students connect with other resources or a job, or simply a caring adult who can listen and advise.

In 2007, Spark had the pleasure of working with over 150 volunteers, including mentors and workshop, field trip, event, and administrative volunteers. We expect to see that number almost double as the program expands in the upcoming year. As always, we are deeply thankful for the time and energy that volunteers contribute to support Spark students.

Local Volunteer Involvement

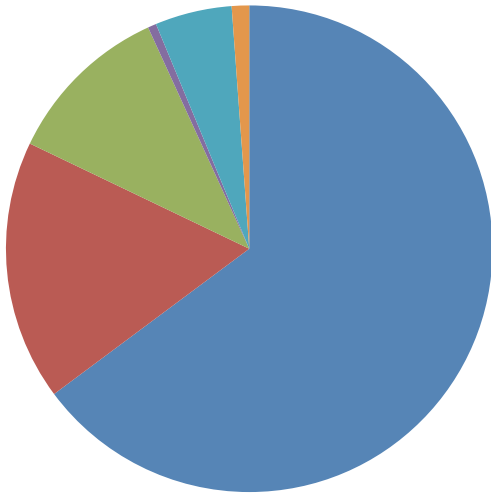


Financial Statement

	2007	2006
Ordinary Income/Expense		
<i>Income</i>		
Foundation support	\$142,386	\$79,500
Individual support	\$38,005	\$21,543
Corporate support	\$24,300	\$10,000
Tuition revenue	\$11,221	\$8,720
Interest revenue	\$2,539	\$118
Government support	\$1,232	\$0
Other earned revenue	\$0	\$195
TOTAL INCOME	\$219,683	\$120,075
<i>Expense</i>		
Personnel	\$132,305	\$19,874
Occupancy	\$25,143	\$12,747
Program	\$18,045	\$7,549
Professional fees	\$14,893	\$527
Fundraising	\$3,349	\$860
Marketing & Outreach	\$1,274	\$75
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$195,010	\$41,632
TOTAL NET ORDINARY EXPENSES	\$24,673	\$78,443
<i>Other Income/Expense</i>		
In-kind income	\$19,353	\$0
In-kind expenses	\$19,353	\$0
Net other income	\$0	\$0
NET INCOME	\$24,673	\$78,443

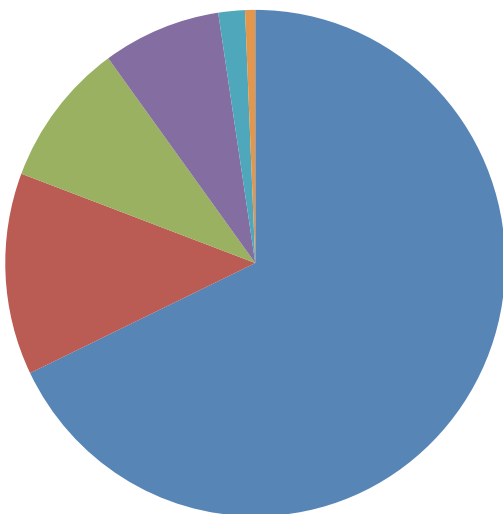
* Net Income is carried over to the next year's programs, and refers largely to funds raised at the end of 2007 for 2008 programs.

Income



- 11.1% Corporate
- 64.8% Foundation
- 17.3% Individual
- 1.2% Interest
- 0.6% Government
- 5.1% Tuition

Expense



- 1.5% Fundraising
- 0.6% Marketing & Outreach
- 11.4% Occupancy
- 60.2% Personnel
- 6.8% Professional fees
- 8.2% Program



Spark's Individual Donors

A special thank you to . . .

Leader's Circle: \$5,000 & greater

Ruth Collins
Julie & Costa Sevastopoulos

Dreamer's Circle: \$1,000 to \$4,999

Wayne Bunker
Judy Samelson
Kurt Schoknecht
Sarah Stewart

Advocate: \$500 to \$999

Karen Arrigo-Hill
Amando Balbuena
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Dennis McBride
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Sponsor: \$100 to \$499

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Friend: \$1 to \$99

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Meghan Latorre
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Shelly Masur
Joyanne McClamroch
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Peter Meredith
Thomas Mohr
Carolyn Moore
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Amber Mortensen
Kerryn O'Connor
Afam Onyema



Martin, a Spark Summer, 2007, graduate, poses with his mentor, Heather Murtagh, of the San Mateo Daily Journal.

Spark's Corporate & Foundation Donors

(Individual Donors, cont'd.)

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Margaret Pinard
Sohana Punithakumar
Liane Quan
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Alicia Ross
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Caroline Tuan
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Benjamin Vanderford
Simon Vivian
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Anonymous

\$20,000 & greater

David & Lucile Packard Foundation
John & Marcia Goldman Foundation
SH Cowell Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

\$10,000 to \$19,999

Atkinson Foundation
Dean Witter Foundation
Kimball Foundation
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Peery Foundation
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Scandling Family Foundation
Staples Foundation for Learning
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\$5,000 to \$9,999

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Yahoo! Employee Foundation

\$2,500 to \$4,999

eBay
Lin Foundation
Union Bank of California
Wells Fargo Bank

Up to \$2,499

All Stars Helping Kids
Autodesk
Bay and Paul Foundations
PG&E
Provident Credit Union
Safeway
Trader Joes
Whole Foods

*Spark has worked to ensure our donor listing is accurate and complete. If your name has not been included or is spelled incorrectly, our many apologies. Please contact our office at (415) 626-5470.



Spark Summer, 2006, graduate, Lane, learns about surgery at Sequoia Hospital.

Spark's Volunteers

BJ Alexander
John Anagnostou
Drew Annis
Pierre Arce
Jared Archbold
Ian Bain
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Rosanne Bautista
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Kathy Grazioli
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Jerry Hill
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Monica Murphy
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Richelle Noroyan
Erin O'Briant
Charlie Olea
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Lawrence Tran
Kristy Troup
Jenna Wallace
Morgan Weiss
Dane Whitaker
Jamie Williams
Jessica Wilson
Tina Wilton
Kate Zelenova
David Zittin



Klutz Toy Designer and Mentor Doug Stillinger poses with his apprentice, Sean, a Fall, 2007, Spark graduate.

board of directors & spark staff

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Community Outreach Manager

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Melanie Seltzer
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Chelsea Austin
Non-Profit Management Intern

“We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all that we need to make us happy is something to be enthusiastic about.”

Albert Einstein

