



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Wellness Hall of Fame announces Deborah Szekely as its inaugural Fellow on her 100th birthday**

London (3 May 2022) – Deborah Szekely, philanthropist, social activist, teacher and entrepreneur, has been inducted into the Wellness Hall of Fame (WellHOF) as its inaugural Fellow on the day of her 100th birthday.

Szekely co-founded destination spa, Rancho La Puerta and founded the Golden Door, as well as being a driving force behind the establishment of The International Spa Association (ISPA) and The Green Spa Network, among other organisations.

She is also a tireless campaigner and fundraiser for wellness-related, environmental and social causes.

In his commendation of Deborah Szekely on behalf of WellHOF, chair Andrew Gibson said:

"We celebrate Deborah for her rich life, her contribution to the health of many hundreds of thousands of people and their families over her career, which stretches back to 1940 – the opening of Rancho La Puerta.

"In an age where many in the wellness industry preach about the importance of self-care, but do not themselves live a well life, Deborah has walked the talk and has the incredible health, vitality and life force to show for it.

Read Andrew Gibson's full commendation of Deborah Szekely below.

Liz Terry, founder of the Wellness Hall of Fame (WellHOF) said: "It is absolutely fitting that Deborah Szekely has been inducted into the Wellness Hall of Fame today – her 100th birthday.

"We celebrate Deborah as an enduring source of inspiration and enlightenment for the entire wellness community, with her incredible energy, wisdom, expertise and zest for life. "We are also honoured for her to be the inaugural Fellow of WellHOF, as her example in her life and her work inspires others.

"As Deborah celebrates with her friends and family in Tecate Mexico, the love and best wishes of all in the wellness community around the world go out to her on this very special and symbolic day. Happy Birthday Deborah.

"Those wishing to celebrate Deborah are encouraged to do so by sharing their recollections and messages via her profile on the WellHOF website at the foot of this page – [www.wellhof.org/profile/deborah-szekely](http://www.wellhof.org/profile/deborah-szekely). Comments may be curated for permanent inclusion in the Wellness Hall of Fame library," said Terry.

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## **About The Wellness Hall of Fame**

The Wellness Hall of Fame (WellHOF) recognises and celebrates the work of pioneers across the entire wellness industry.

It also enshrines their collective wisdom in a central WellHOF library that is accessible by all, to share knowledge across generations and reflect the extraordinary work being undertaken in the wellness industries globally.

The WellHOF library is regularly updated to ensure records are kept current, adding to the rich resource.

WellHOF welcomes contributions, recollections and the sharing of knowledge from industry professionals via its comments pages.

Comments are curated for permanent inclusion in the Wellness Hall of Fame library, making it powerfully representative.

WellHOF was founded to support the wellness community of spa, sport and recreation, health and fitness, exercise science, nutrition, beauty, mental health and self-care.

WellHOF's chosen logo device is the hexagon, representing the beehive – a powerful symbol of a healthy, energetic, productive, collaborative and functioning community.

### **The Commendation – Deborah Szekely**

*Andrew Gibson, chair of the Wellness Hall of Fame*

It is symbolic that the Wellness Hall of Fame has welcomed Deborah Szekely as its first Fellow on her 100th birthday (3 May 2022).

The wellness industry rightly acknowledges Deborah Szekely as the 'godmother' of spa and wellness for many reasons. Deborah is a pioneer who embraced a genuine code of wellness as early as the 1940s. We admire her boundless entrepreneurial spirit, outstanding business achievements, commitment to excellence, unwavering personal philosophies and desire to motivate others to create their own wellness path.

It is no coincidence that the two world-class properties routinely vying for the number one accolade – Rancho La Puerta and Golden Door – both had Deborah driving them at the start and through their development. She has a deep understanding of personal wellness and how to engage and delight consumers, coupled with the tenacity to get things done and overcome obstacles.

Deborah is great fun and has always known how to deliver authentic, effective and lighthearted wellness interventions.

In addition to her work in business, she was also a catalyst behind the founding of two of the industry's major organisations – ISPA and The Green Spa Network – both of which benefitted from her vision and wisdom in their early stages and her support as they blossomed.

Deborah has also been a huge supporter of the Global Wellness Summit, the Global Wellness Institute and their founder, Susie Ellis.

In an age where many in the wellness industry preach about the importance of self-care but do not themselves live a well life, Deborah has walked the talk and has the health, vitality and life force to show for it.

She has pursued a lifelong quest for knowledge, coupled with a mission to enlighten and inspire others. This sees her lecturing regularly to share her century of learnings with all who wish to hear her fresh, challenging, invaluable perspectives on life, self-care, science and wellbeing.

Deborah is a true entrepreneur and a creative problem solver and has moved through her long life, seeing an opportunity or a need and then launching initiatives or ventures to deliver change.

A significant proportion of this work has been through volunteering for charities Deborah has started herself, as well as through others she has supported.

As a case in point, on her 100th birthday, she is launching a new drive called Our Green Umbrella to channel birthday donations into tree planting in schools in Tecate – the home of Rancho La Puerta – to combat climate change and to green local schoolyards.

Deborah takes great delight in family – her own family and her extended family of the Rancho La Puerta team, where many generations of the same families work side by side, looking after guests.

Rancho La Puerta has brought employment and opportunity to Tecate, Mexico, where it is based and also attracts experts from around the world to work – drawn by its high standards and expert, diverse community.

We celebrate Deborah for her rich life, her contribution to the health of many hundreds of thousands of people and their families over her career which stretches back to 1940 – the opening of Rancho La Puerta.

Deborah has always been someone I have looked up to and followed from a personal perspective. She's inspired me to be confident and focused on my own contribution to the world of wellness – a feeling I know will be shared by so many of you.

We look forward to more adventures to come.

**Andrew Gibson, chair  
The Wellness Hall of Fame  
3 May 2022**

#### **Photography**

Download portrait of Deborah Szekely via Dropbox [here](#):

Photo caption: Deborah Szekely at Rancho La Puerta, Tecate, Mexico 2022.

Photo credit: Rancho La Puerta

#### **Editor's contacts**

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