



Deborah Szekely

Narrative Biography

C.V. available on request

SAN DIEGO, March 10, 2014: Equal parts community activist and entrepreneur, 92-year-old Deborah Szekely launched WELLNESS WARRIOR.org in 2013. The non-profit, online movement supports Deborah's efforts to secure happier, healthier lives for Americans via the *prevention* of illness, as well as assuring that our nation's food, water, and farmlands are free of chemicals and GMOs.

Wellness Warrior aims to rally and unite the entire wellness community, from everyday citizens to organic food activists ... and especially leaders in the spa and fitness realm, where Deborah has been a pioneer since 1940. She believes that a united voice can better influence lawmakers through public pressure, lobbying, campaign donations, and other efforts.

Wellness Warrior also aggregates health, food, environmental, and fitness news for its members via timely newsletters, and supports the research and educational efforts of many existing organizations, such as Environmental Working Group and Center for Science in the Public Interest (of which she is a board member).

Deborah has been quoted widely, saying, "It's time to take action. I've spent 74 years teaching wellness, which I define as taking ownership of your body. And we've successfully influenced hundreds of thousands to embrace a healthy lifestyle. Yet Americans on the whole are sicker and fatter than ever. We can and will help all Americans embrace the axiom that an 'ounce of prevention is really worth a pound of cure.'

Worldwide, Deborah Szekely is recognized as the pioneer of the mind/ body/ fitness movement. In 1940, she and her husband, the late Edmond Szekely (renowned health researcher, philosopher, and author), founded Rancho La Puerta in Tecate, Baja California, Mexico—the first fitness spa in modern times, and recently named "World's Best Destination Spa" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine three out of the last four years. On her own, in 1958, Deborah established the premiere luxury spa, a resort the press has called, "the one all others emulate:" the Golden Door, in Escondido, California.

In her home city of San Diego, civic leaders recognize her as an “icon” of community activism and philanthropy. San Diego Rotary named her “Mrs. San Diego” in 2002, among many other honors from other organizations.

Today, she lectures at both spas and travels frequently, speaking on the high principles of “living the longer, healthier life,” as well as being a tireless advocate for health reforms.

In 2012, Mexican President Felipe Calderon presented her with Mexico’s highest honor for a foreign citizen: *The Order of the Aztec Eagle*. President Calderon praised her life-long community involvement and efforts to further the health of Mexico’s environment and people.

Looking back over the past 30 years, Deborah Szekely takes greatest pride in three achievements outside the spa realm:

After running for Congress in 1982 (she was defeated in the primary as a pro-choice candidate in a conservative district), Mrs. Szekely conceived and launched “Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide.” The idea hit her during her campaign: While trying to learn how a Congressional office is run, she found nothing. Defeated office holders were literally vacating their offices with a “sink or swim attitude” toward the newly elected. Now in its 13th edition, with the 14th in the works, *Setting Course* continues as the comprehensive training and reference manual for newly elected Senators and House of Representatives members. Staff members on “The Hill” refer to it as “the bible.”

From 1984 to 1991, Mrs. Szekely was President of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF), an independent foreign assistance agency of the United States government that furthers grassroots development by awarding grants directly to the organized poor throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. As a U.S. diplomat with the IAF, she worked in every country but Cuba and authored program innovations that increased the cost effectiveness and accountability of U.S. development efforts.

In 1991, Deborah founded Eureka Communities, a national training program for CEOs/ leaders of nonprofit organizations in which CEOs mentor other CEOs, foster teamwork, and create connections and friendships that last lifetimes.

Today Deborah is Honorary President and Chair of Washington Spa Alliance (WSPA), Washington, D.C., and a founder and "board member for life" of International Spa Association (ISPA). She also currently sits on the boards of Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and the Congressional Management Foundation.

“I dream of the time, very soon, when we will celebrate a wellness movement that has forever changed the lifestyles of the America people,” she says. Through Wellness Warrior and her many other efforts, Deborah Szekely will continue to carry the banner of prevention into every battle against those practices and policies that threaten the health of all people today, and the generations to come.