Beat: Business

THE POWERFUL GLOBAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF AN AMERICAN DREAM

RANCHO LA PUERTA EXTENDS A HELPING HAND

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USPA NEWS - Regardless of how often we talk about the American Dream as a socioeconomic promise of material success, most people tend to equate it with something more profound and aspirational than materialism. The American Dream represents the idealism of the great American experiment, the power of the individual in America; the commitment to making a positive difference. .

The good news is that the desire to advance philanthropy, increase positive, global impact, social consciousness and collective self-awareness, is alive and well in America today. A drop out of life into a soporific, bewitched, stunning, eco-friendly retreat in Tecate, minutes from the US-Mexico border, the enchanted resort Rancho La Puerta epitomizes just that. It is the American Dream of Deborah and Edmond Szekely, a visionary, young, emigrant couple, who in 1940 along with their business partner José Manuel Jasso, created Rancho La Puerta, a beautiful hideaway to promote holistic health, fitness, and natural living, is leading the way of corporate social responsibility.

With instances of disease and violence mushrooming, America is in a fragile state, standing at crossroads: a pandemic, gun violence, the me2 movement, racial unrest, climate change, political polarization, civil liberties, immigration and much more. Once admired for our competence and values, we are now rebuilding our soft power, cultural diplomacy, and American Dreams. People are yearning for peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, and tranquility. The need of the hour is focused on health, tranquility, and unity.

Designed to encourage quietude, peacefulness, inspiration, and reflection, Rancho La Puerta is a one-of-a-kind health sanctuary. It is a true labor of love. A love child of its owners and an ode to the land it inhabits. By day hiking shoes to explore the mystic, sacred, clad 3,885' Mt. Kuchumaa's 40 miles of hiking trails; by night, laze under the stars, reminisce over adventures, listen to inspiring lectures or enjoy an evening with world renowned opera stars. This serene relaxation oasis opens its pueratas to visitors eager to reactivate internal energy systems, while at the same time saving the environment.

With an exemplary portfolio of activities and a staff who seems to possess mind-reading skills and a love for pleasing, Rancho La Puerta offers breathtaking sensory experiences, a dream of laidback outdoor pools, sports activities, and spa treatments. Their approach to nutrition is to make changes to eating habits that are psychologically as well as nutritionally sustainable. The "light menu", all home-grown organic produce, is tasty, low-calfare that takes the strain off the digestive system.

Guests can enjoy 32 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens tastefully adorned by striking sculptures, eleven gyms, four pools, a running track, as well as tennis, pickleball, basketball, volleyball courts. Following the winding brick paths, could lead you to an organic farm with a cooking school, three full-service holistic spas, a wine bar, juice bar or art studios or WiFi lounges for dedicated screen time. 86 picturesque, individual casitas scattered throughout the resort offer unrivaled space creating the perfect escape for an unforgettable vacation.

No doubt, the resort is in a league of its own in more than one way. Not only have the owners excelled in building the Lamborghini of spa retreats and preserving the stunning environment, but more so, the Ranch has become a catalyst for the celebration of a bi-national past, present and future, turning the American Dream turned into an admirable example of soft power, public and cultural diplomacy.

All Ranch employees are part of the "Rancho Familia", many having worked on the Ranch for 30 years or longer; some for generations. The workers are extremely loyal and hardworking as they are made to feel comfortable and appreciated in their work environment. The extraordinary beauty of the land is only surpassed by the kindness of the staff; exceptional people each with touching stories, generations caring for guests. Sandy Mora, the front office supervisor, has an infectious, bubbly personality; she will

rapidly share with you her enthusiasm for the Ranch, the fact that her mother worked here for three decades, tell you that she met her husband here, tell you about the program for retired workers allowing them to return and visit the Ranch, her entire family has connections to the Ranch. Nestor will pick you up and drop you off at the border; he is a Tecate businessman who worked for the Ranch part time for 18 years, more than half of his life. You will find Luis, a dedicated groundskeeper who has tended the grounds for 18 years and Klaudi who for the past 23 years ensured that the casitas look spic and span, gladly going out of their ways to help you find the right path to your adobe once you are lost. You will run into Omar Michoacán who will drop a heavy case without a blink of an eye and lead you to the concierge booth if can't answer your questions. All of them "are the Familia."

Due to the pandemic the total tourism consumption in Mexico decreased by 1.6 trillion Mexican pesos – which equates to about USD$75.5 billion (López, 2020). Tourism generates 17 percent of Mexico's GDP, a larger percentage than in any emerging country other than Thailand. It was one pillar of the economy that was largely unaffected by economic uncertainty. Despite zero or very little income of the resort, all 1000 + employees of Rancho La Puerta continued to receive their paycheck promptly as payroll was secured thanks to the generosity, private funds, of its owner during these difficult times. This temporary sacrifice is not only an example of greatness but also proof of the deep roots, commitment and concern the Szekely family has for its employees and the people of Tecate. Their continuous financial support for the Ranch's personnel, despite themselves being faced with drastically reduced incomes accompanied by substantial fixed costs, prevented disruptions to the life of thousands of Mexican families who would have potentially endured a very steep economic toll. Committed to stewardship and leading with strong social consciousness, the family cares about their employees and their families as much as they care about their guests; provides them with medical services, inspiring educational opportunities, access to sports and cultural programs. They are as much interested in preserving the earth as they are in preserving the people. Sandy, Nestor, Luis, Klaudi and Omar are "one of ours" as thoughtful, considerate, compassionate Deborah would say. They belong to the Ranch family; they are not just employees. "I have made a commitment to them".

More than half the people in Mexico's workforce hold informal jobs, they are housekeepers, vendors, day laborers and small-business owners who normally would not receive social security, are not entitled to sick leave, and do not receive pensions. Had Ranch employees been laid off, as many people working for other US businesses have been, there would have been no support system to save them from destitution. The size of the informal economy means there is no useful estimate of the unemployment rate. Most Ranch workers live in the town of Tecate, an important border crossing between the US and Mexico, founded on October 12, 1892. Like Rancho La Puerta, Tecate's journey, is a unifying one; both with roots deeply grounded in the ancestral values and traditions of Mexico, and with admiration for the new generation who contributes to the bicultural evolution as it forges its own paths. In 2012, because of its rich history and its many natural and architectonic attractions, Tecate was granted the status of Pueblo Mágico (Magic Town), a denomination which recognizes locations around Mexico which possess outstanding or unique features regarding their history, natural beauty, architecture, gastronomy, or cultural heritage.

Intending to give back, improve living conditions and enhance opportunities in the Town of Tecate, the Szekely family and former General Manager, José Manuel Jasso created in 1977 "La Fundación La Puerta", a non-profit community action foundation with the mission to "actively support environmental, social, and educational projects in Tecate, including the preservation of endangered native plant and wildlife habitat within this region". The Institution is committed to practicing responsible environmental stewardship and sustainability demonstrated by the management of these historic grounds, multiple eco-programs, as well as efforts to initiate and explore forward-thinking activities in the community of Tecate and beyond.

Continuing the legacy of kindness and gentleness today, is Ranch president Sarah Livia Szekely Brightwood. She is dedicated to protecting the best in human values and the enrichment of life through programs which explore the important public, health, and civic issues of our times. A fundamental social vision in both policies and programs, allows Sarah to go beyond legal obligations, achieving success while at the same time having a positive social impact far outside of Rancho La Puerta's borders.

It is a good time to be reminded that one of the most iconic and powerful voices for compassion, unity and amity was Anne Frank, a

13-year-old Jewish girl hiding from the Nazis during World War II. She sums the desire for peace up best in her Diary of a Young Girl, "In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit".

Deborah's & Edmund's Rancho La Puerta embodies in deed that gentle place; the spirits are kind, the heart rules, and everybody feels part of a loving family. The American Dream came true for them. They did their little bit of good where they were. Those little bits of good put together are the ones which overwhelm the world.
Until we meet again Rancho La Puerta, mi Corazón, "Siempre Mejor", always better!

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