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PRESS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COUNTESS SPENCER ELECTED ASHOKA FELLOW: RECOGNIZED FOR FILLING GAP IN CARE FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Accompanied by her husband Charles Spencer, 9th Earl Spencer, Countess Spencer honored in Mexico City event

MEXICO CITY, Oct. 1, 2015 -- Countess Spencer, who founded [Whole Child International](#) in 2004, has been elected an [Ashoka Fellow](#). She joins the world's largest and most influential network of social entrepreneurs in recognition of her decade of visionary work establishing and building Whole Child International.

Earl Spencer, who serves on the Whole Child board, shared his appreciation for his wife's work: "Karen's a beautiful woman with an even more beautiful heart. I'm in awe of what she's done over the past decade for these agonizingly vulnerable children. I'm thrilled for her that she's received this recognition, and hope it will inspire more individuals, corporations and foundations to join us in this effort to help some of the most needy and underserved children in the world."

Karen Spencer founded Whole Child International when she discovered that most of the larger organizations addressing child welfare issues in developing countries have policies against working with orphanages. Her charity fills that gap, and has been proven by third-party evaluation to potentially improve the lives of millions of children.

Diego Diaz-Martin, Executive Director of Ashoka Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, said, "We are delighted to welcome Karen as a Fellow. She has identified a major and global problem — the failure to invest time, leadership, or other resources in the world's orphanages — even though they remain responsible for millions of children. She has developed a comprehensive and well-designed approach dealing with each class of actor serving the field."

Karen's program is unique, scalable, and innovative, applicable not just in orphanages, but across the entire spectrum of childcare. It works with all sectors, partnering directly with government, academia, and direct caregivers. Whole Child is collaborating with Duke University's Global Health Institute to measure impact, and gain insights to help future program development.

"In founding Whole Child, I was passionate about finding a way to give the most vulnerable children a fighting chance," said Karen Spencer. "This recognition by Ashoka helps shine new light on the profound need for quality care, and also on the exciting reality that there is something we can do, today, with existing resources and settings to give these forgotten children a chance of a productive life."

"Today we are honored to be of service to the government of El Salvador as they implement the President's ambitious initiatives to improve quality of care for vulnerable children in their country. I would also like to thank the Inter-American Development Bank, the Korean Poverty Reduction Fund, and the private donors who have enabled us to come this far. Hopefully this recognition will lead to more support for our work, as there are so many children in need, and so many more governments interested in partnering with us to help their children reach their full potential."

Bernardo Guillamon, Manager of the Inter-American Development Bank's Office of Outreach and Partnerships, said, "the IDB seeks to confront development challenges with innovative solutions, and our partnership with Whole Child International allowed us to do just that. Working through an inventive yet low-cost intervention, and alongside Karen Spencer's capable leadership, we were able to give children in Central America brighter futures. We applaud Ms. Spencer on this recent honor, and are confident she will bring capable leadership and great energy to Ashoka."

Additional information on Whole Child International and Countess Spencer's induction as an Ashoka Fellow can be found at www.ashoka.org/fellow/karen-spencer.

About Whole Child International (www.wholechild.org)

Whole Child International is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to improve quality of care for vulnerable children in orphanages and other limited-resource childcare settings.

About Ashoka (www.ashoka.org)

Ashoka launched the field of social entrepreneurship and has activated multi-sector partners across the world who increasingly look to entrepreneurial talent and new ideas to solve social problems. Founded by Bill Drayton in 1980, Ashoka has provided a platform for people dedicated to changing the world.

About the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (<http://www.iadb.org>)

The Inter-American Development Bank is devoted to improving lives. Established in 1959, the IDB is a leading source of long-term financing for economic, social and institutional development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The IDB also conducts cutting-edge research and provides policy advice, technical assistance and training to public and private sector clients throughout the region.

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