

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Summerland Publishing Releases "A Handbook for Citizen Farmers" -- Organic Farmer and Artist Join Forces with a Creative Solution to Help the National Obesity Problem by Teaching Children to Grow Their Own Food**

In concurrence with Mrs. Obama's Healthy Kids Initiative, Farmer/Teacher Tom Shepherd and his Artist/Teacher wife Susan LeVine are committed to creating an enthusiasm and passion for growing food and eating healthy. There is no greater joy than planting a seed, watching it grow and then eating the fruits of your labor. Carrots do not grow in vending machines, so where do they come from? Tom and Susan of Shepherd Farms in Carpinteria, California want to help kids find the answer to that question.

A fifth-generation Santa Barbara resident, Tom Shepherd began farming organically in the Santa Barbara area in 1973, spurred by a desire to grow healthy food for the community. He is one of the earliest members of the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market Association, where he has served as past president of the association and still personally sells his produce at least twice a week. Tom was one of the original salad mix producers in California. He is responsible for many solar inventions that are used daily on his farm including the solar digester used for compost teas, the solar salad spinner, and the solar dehydrator used to dry his famous Herbes de Provence. Tom sells his wonderful produce at five local markets each week, and provides food through his CSA program where local residents can be members of his farm and get beautiful bounty delivered weekly. Also, Tom provides food that is served in local schools and at some of Santa Barbara's finest restaurants.

Tom Shepherd's farm has been hosting a group of people through the Woofers program, an international program that provides opportunities for people of all ages to live at the farm and learn about farming by having the daily experience of working on the farm. Tom provides a place to live with food and a small stipend in exchange for six hours a day of farm work. He has been fortunate enough to attract a wonderful group of people who have contributed to Shepherd Farms through their efforts and exuberant enthusiasm for farming.

Tom teaches about the importance of small farms, sustainability, and eating fresh local foods to UCSB students and local schools. Families and school groups are always welcome to visit the farm and the farm cart is open four days a week so that there are always opportunities to buy Tom's beautiful produce. Many people believe in the incredible healing powers of eating organically, and anyone who has eaten Tom's strawberries knows what a gift Tom and Shepherd Farms is to our community.

Susan LeVine is an accomplished writer and artist. She has been a licensed artist for Recycled Paper Greetings since 1998, and has illustrated book covers and other items. Susan is most known for her company, Uccellino, a company that sells inspirational products like Guide Birds, Spheres of Wonder and Message Boxes. Susan is a passionate bird lover: she paints birds and sells them at Upstairs at Wendy Foster, Pierre LaFond. Susan also paints plein air because of the incredible inspiration of Santa Barbara's beauty. Susan has been a teacher for the past twenty years. She feels a strong commitment to children and is happy to have had the opportunity to collaborate with Tom and make his dream of creating a book to inspire children to grow things a reality.

The Handbook for Citizen Farmers came about when Tom was courting his wife, Susan. They were driving back from San Francisco and Tom told Susan that he had an idea for a book that would teach children, families and schools how to grow a garden. As Tom manned the wheel Susan took out a pad of paper that she had taken from the hotel room while they were visiting San Francisco. As Tom drove he told Susan the steps of growing a garden, Susan jotted things down and together they put the book together. When Susan got home she started thinking about how to illustrate the book. Initially Susan, who loves birds suggested that the farmer be a

bird but Tom though perhaps he should be a child. After three drafts of the book Susan was finally satisfied with the little Citizen Farmer who is meant to represent that little sense of wonder and desire that is part of growing a garden. Initially, Susan didn't want him to have any color in his hair or skin because she wanted him to be relatable to anyone of any color but finally settled on a character that would look like Tom as a little boy.

So, how to make a garden and become a citizen farmer? Tom and Susan have now published "A Handbook for Citizen Farmers" with Summerland Publishing in California. This simple guide uses an inviting format with beautiful watercolor illustrations to show children, families and schools how to grow a garden. Tom and Susan are already planning on future books for children about healthy eating.

"A Handbook for Citizen Farmers" by Tom Shepherd & Susan LeVine, 978-0-9837923-1-4, \$14.95  
Published by Summerland Publishing in California: *"We publish books to help make the world a better place."*  
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