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Fresh food and farming star in family documentary

A film that has been called "a love song to farmers" will be screened during this year's Moondance International Film Festival just a few blocks from Boulder's own Farmers' Market.

Filmmaker Mara LeGrand lived in Boulder during the formative years of the Boulder Farmers' Market and says she's "in awe of how much it's grown." *Heart & Soil*, a 45-minute family documentary showing at the Shambhala Center, 1345 Spruce Street, on Saturday, August 30, at 6 p.m., takes its audience on a journey into the rich landscape and lives of small scale farming, the bustling energy of farmers' markets, and farm-to-school programs.

In 1968 LeGrand's father decided to retire in Boulder and brought his family back from several years living in Turkey and Lebanon. Mara attended Campion Academy in Berthoud. She married a musician and had a couple of kids. A few years later she found herself living in Boulder as a single mother, juggling several jobs at once to make ends meet. She worked as a private gardener, night shift hospice and home health aide, and sold advertising for Boulder Magazine.

In the 1980s she was living in Boulder and Nederland, and she worked for Eldora Mountain Resort as an EMT with Ski Patrol and a lift operator. But with a Ph.D. in Holistic Studies, she found she couldn't escape the pull of public and private health education and nutrition. She became a public health worker and writer for a documentary about bringing western medicine east to Nepal, Tibet and China. While there, she worked with China's ministry of health on hepatitis research and public health education ideas.

In 1985 she became the first Wellness Coordinator and directed the Wellness Program for the city of Boulder. Later, she moved to Steamboat Springs and became co-owner, with her second husband, of LeGrand Adventures, a river outfitting business that specialized in wellness, family dynamics, botany, geology, and women's leadership trips.

After she and her family moved to Durango, she conducted a radio program called "Your Health Is In Your Hand" for KDUR. She owned and operated Skydancer Ayurveda Health Retreat in Durango.

Then the former photojournalist found filmmaking and a project that would be a perfect marriage of her creative needs and her interest in nutrition and health. She began by filming the local farmers' market, thinking she could sell a short piece to the local television station. But then she decided to follow the story of the produce and the farmers who brought it to the market. She began to document the lives of farmers in the rugged Four Corners area near her home in Durango, "following the farmers' hands and hearts into the field and capturing their stories respectfully." Fourteen months and \$20,000 later, the result was *Heart & Soil*.

"It's a microcosmic look at life on a farm today. It could be anywhere in the world, but it's all within a 200-mile radius of my home in southwestern Colorado," LeGrand says. "The farmers in the film are a testament that a rural, farming life still exists or is being resurrected on a small but significant scale, where people are not only supporting their own families but helping feed others."

Heart & Soil follows dyed-in-denim-and-dust mid-size farmers who practice conventional farming techniques and need large, if not global, market outlets. It also visits with the new breed of farmers who work small plots of land and whose veggies, fruits, flowers, eggs, cheese, plants and organic meats fill the tables and bins at local and regional farmers' markets. "My intention was to take the audience into the lives of farmers doing the work and living connected to nature. I wanted to draw sketches of people relating to the land that audiences might be more likely to remember than statistics or political talking points," LeGrand says. "I am pleased to have grown a film that will nourish and sustain efforts toward a local food system through many seasons to come."

The film was an official selection of the Nashville Film Festival, Indie Spirit, Taos Mountain Film, Santa Fe Film Festival, Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival, and the San Luis Obispo Film Festival.

Deborah Madison, author of *Local Flavors—Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets* (Random House) and a leading member of Slow Foods International and farmers' market associations, says, "*Heart & Soil* shows the viewer a beautiful slice of that complex portrait of food and farming that is a part of all of our lives. Whether you have long been a supporter of local food and farming or just considering your first visit to a farmers' market, this film will be seen in turn as charming, devastating, hopeful, historical and most of all

inspiring. *Heart & Soil* should be required viewing in every American classroom.”

“In a field where many documentaries are fact-heavy, or driven by political banners, I hope this film provides a respect and contrast that people will remember or integrate in a non-intellectual, more sensual way,” LeGrand says.

Heart & Soil is a finalist in the feature documentary category at the Moondance Film Festival.

For more information about the Moondance International Film Festival, visit www.moondancefilmfestival.com.

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