

If you paddle out at any one of the surf spots hiding in the nooks and crannies of Montecito, chances are you will encounter Tim Kirshtner. Rarely wearing a leash, often riding a well-worn surf-board he has rescued from the trash heap and restored, drawing classic, wholly functional lines, and always making the wave to its end, Kirshtner is not only a mainstay both in the water and on the beach at places like Hammond's and Miramar but he is also a steadfast and lifelong defender of the sandy shores he grew up on. "Surfing is not all about having fun," warned Kirshtner. "As surfers we take so much from the ocean that we really have to give back, too."

A product of: El Montecito, Montecito Union, Santa Barbara Junior High, Santa Barbara High, and Santa Barbara City College, Kirshtner was stoked on surfing at a young age but was far from your average grommet. At ten years old, after deciding on his own to pick up the trash that littered the beaches and bushes between his beloved Hammond's and the Santa Barbara Graveyard, he sent out handwritten letters to each and every resident of the affluent Channel Drive community asking for their support in his trash collecting activities. After getting positive responses, the Beach Doctor – as he became known – was born, and for years after, whenever the surf wasn't good, young Kirshtner spent his after-school hours and weekends picking up cigarette butts, broken glass, and assorted other rubbish from the beach, storm drains, and road around his favorite stretch of sand. "When I started, I would get nine trash cans worth of stuff a day, but in the end, I was only finding half a trash can a week," remembered Kirshtner with an obvious and rightful inflection of pride.

Now 30 years old, Kirshtner drives a biodiesel truck, dedicates heaps of his time to Growing Solutions – a nonprofit that restores coastal native habitats from Summerland to the Santa Barbara Airport – and runs his own custom sail and canvas business, which speaks directly to his other lifelong passion of sailing.

Constantly tinkering around and putting his pragmatic mind to work on inventions, Kirshtner received a bit of notoriety a few years back when, unbeknownst to him, Surfer Magazine ran a photo of him using one of his creations, the paddle wheel, near S.B. Harbor. However, there was no accompanying caption about the paddle-wheel – a device that attaches to the back of a sailboat and allows you to pedal your boat up to 3.5 knots forward and backward via a big wheel that cuts through the water a la surfers' hands. The attention without any actual info on his invention has been an irritant over the years to Kirshtner because it wasted an opportunity to spread the word. "I've just always wanted to get people stoked on the environment and put ideas out there to try and help think of their own," he said.

