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## ***Who is Shark Baby?***

### *Local Author and Illustrator tell a Unique Shark Story*

Mt. Pleasant, SC (February 10, 2013)— New to bookstores this spring, *Shark Baby*, by author Ann Downer and illustrator Shennen Bersani, introduces children to a unique shark and his underwater world.

Shark Baby hasn't even hatched when his adventure begins. Throughout the book, he visits a variety of ocean habitats and each step of the way learns what type of shark he isn't, until one special skill saves Shark Baby from danger and reveals his identity.

For *Shark Baby*, Downer wanted to focus on a type of shark that is rarely seen in children's books. "Most kids' books and media attention in general focus on sharks as bloodthirsty killing machines, when they're actually this ancient group of amazingly diverse animals: all kinds of shapes and sizes and patterns, many different ways of 'making a living' as a shark," said Downer. Those ways of living are explored in depth in the *For Creative Minds* section of the book, which includes four pages of non-fiction material after the story.

Because *Shark Baby* isn't your typical shark book, Downer tackled writing in a different way. "I really led with my heart rather than my head when writing *Shark Baby*, which is more the way I write fiction than nonfiction. The read-aloud rhythm of the book came first, and idea of his story and the other characters, and the scientific details were worked out later."

Illustrator Shennen Bersani was happy to research the underwater habitats. "Never one to be an armchair researcher, my *Shark Baby* research took me on an adventure from Boston Harbor, to swimming with manatees in Crystal River, FL, to holding swell shark egg cases in the kelp forest of Monterey Bay, CA. By crossing the country, I was able to see all of the undersea creatures I illustrated in *Shark Baby* 'up close and personal.' It is my hope that I can share my journey with the children who read this book and take them for a ride along with Shark Baby through his different ocean habitats as he learns who he is and finds his place in the world."

*Shark Baby* includes Sylvan Dell's signature educational features including the information packed "for creative minds" section, online teaching activities and quizzes. Also, the facts in *Shark Baby* were vetted by experts at Mote Marine laboratory; they are aligned to Common Core and state standards so parents can feel confident that what their children are being taught is accurate, and as always, fun!

**Ann Downer** has never lived very far from the ocean. When she was little, her uncle took her to a beach to see horseshoe crabs, and she has been interested in sea creatures ever since. She spent part of her childhood in



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and around the Pacific Ocean, living first in the Philippines and then in Thailand. Now she lives in Somerville, Massachusetts, not far from the Atlantic Ocean. With her husband and son, she likes to go looking for sea creatures in tide pools in Maine. She once had a chance to go out in a very small boat with some scientists who study whales, and got to listen to the whales coming up for air. She used to be scared of sharks (she still is, a little!) but mostly thinks they are some of the most beautiful and fascinating creatures on Earth. Ann helped edit two books about the ocean for grown-ups: *Oceans: Heart of Our Blue Planet* and *Underwater Eden: Saving the Last Coral Wilderness on Earth*. She is the author of five novels for young readers and *Elephant Talk*, a book about the ways elephants communicate. Her book for older kids about urban wildlife, *Wild Animal Neighbors*, will be published later this year. For more information, visit her website, <http://anndowner.wordpress.com/>.

Award-winning children's book illustrator **Shennen Bersani** has two million copies of her illustrated books cherished and read by families throughout the world. She has been a freelance illustrator since 1989. She works primarily with colored pencils, sometimes using a mixed-media technique of colored pencil, crayon, and paint. Her art delivers a unique blend of realism, heartfelt emotion, love of nature, and life lessons for children of all ages. In addition to *Home in the Cave*, *The Glaciers are Melting!* and *Astro: The Stellar Sea Lion* for Sylvan Dell, Shennen has illustrated a number of best-selling books, including, *Snakes: Long, Longer, Longest*; *Sharks: Big, Bigger, Biggest*; *Ocean Counting: Odd Numbers*; *Icky Bug Shapes*; and *My Sister, Alicia May*. Her art also appears in many magazines, newspapers, and publications. Shennen lives with her family near Boston. For more information, visit her website at <http://www.shennenbersani.com/>.

To schedule an interview or request more information about Ann Downer, Shennen Bearsani, or *Shark Baby* please contact Heather Williams at [heatherwilliams@sylvandellpublishing.com](mailto:heatherwilliams@sylvandellpublishing.com) or (843) 971-6722.

### About Sylvan Dell Publishing

Sylvan Dell is on a mission to improve child literacy with science and math through fictional picture books. Using prose and pictures, children are delighted with stories of their favorite animals, planets, or even place. This leads to the exploration of facts and learning activities in each book's *For Creative Minds* pages. Sylvan Dell carefully designs each book to portray accurately the chosen subject. Vetted by experts in that field, and aligned to common core and state standards; each book is a unique asset to educational programs. Sylvan Dell has grown to include more than 80 authors and illustrators, and honored to have won more than 70 book awards since its inception in 2005.