Meals on Wheels
of Charlottesville | Albemarle

Neighbors helping neighbors … one meal at a time.

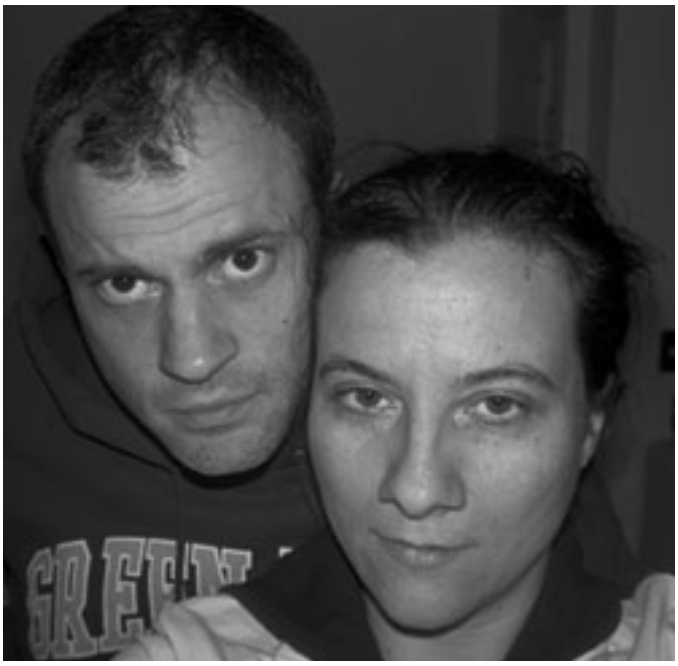
Volunteer Profile

Husband & Wife Donate Artistry to Meals on Wheels

From the click of her mouse and the tip of his brush, Lawren Spera and Steve Ingham make a unique contribution of time and talent to Meals on Wheels. For the fourth year in a row, this husband and wife team will lend their artistic touch to help produce a beautiful program for the Meals on Wheels Kitchen Tour, the organization's biggest fundraising event of the year. (This year's Kitchen Tour is set for Sept. 10-11, featuring homes in the Westview Ave. area, off Rugby Road.)

It all started in 2002, when Lawren Spera, a graphic designer with BoxerJam, was introduced to Meals on Wheels by a friend who delivered meals. Meals on Wheels was launching its first Kitchen Tour event and needed someone to design the program. Lawren agreed and is preparing now to layout her 4 th program. "It feels like a privilege," she says, "my biggest soft spot in the world is for the elderly and people who may be lonely — it's amazing to me that there are people who fill these gaps in people's lives. It makes me happy about humanity."

And it's no small task she's taken on. "The hardest thing is getting the information from advertisers. So many don't have graphic designers, so I get raw information and design ads myself," she says. "I try to design the layout of the brochure so it's balanced, with advertising and copy and each ad placed appropriately. The cover is really fun. Steve Taylor takes these amazing, sharp photographs. We pick one and then I mock up several versions of the cover."



Lawren has a studio art/art history degree from UVa. In her day job, she is as a designer with BoxerJam, where she designs and animates online games. She also does freelance print design, to help pay for her renovating habit. She and Steve live in a late 1800s home, in which they've replaced all the plumbing and electrical and, of course, have re-done the kitchen. She replaced all the electrical herself and reports "it passed inspection!"

The Meals on Wheels Kitchen Tour is a huge project, but, Lawren adds, "I've always had architectural leanings," making the Kitchen Tour was a natural fit for this volunteer.

Steve first volunteered his talents to the Kitchen Tour in 2003, when he drew the homes on the Rugby Road tour. The drawings were featured in the program and, framed, were given to the homeowners as an expression of appreciation.

According to Steve, "it's been very educational for me. I came up with a water color style. I was trying to do something architectural that conveyed a sense of the house — how it's built and structured, while being loose too, since my style is free and gestural. By the last year, I came up with a style that I'm using in other work now." Steve is self-trained and calls himself a graphofile — since "drawing is my thing." As a full-time professional artist, he's done commissions for businesses and private individuals, including portraits – even dog portraits. This month, he's working on a 28-foot mural in the new Superstars Pizza business, across from the Barracks Road Shopping Center on Emmett Street. Born into a creative family, Steve is the son of two longtime Charlottesville residents, playwright Robert Ingham and costume designer Rosemary Ingham. Samples of Steve's work are available via www.steveingham.com.