

# LAURNA GODWIN



CO-FOUNDER AND PARTNER  
VECTOR COMMUNICATIONS CORP.

BY DIANA LYNN BARR  
[dbarr@bizjournals.com](mailto:dbarr@bizjournals.com)

Laurna Godwin may have traded the mass audience of a broadcast anchor for a more personal approach, but her work still has far-reaching effects.

Godwin, 44, is co-founder and partner of Vector Communications, a public engagement and communications consulting firm she started with her partner, Jessica Perkins, in 1998.

"We bring citizens together to discuss and resolve public policy issues," Godwin said. Vector's five-person staff uses strategic planning, events, media relations and video production to act as go-between for its client agencies and the audiences the agencies want to reach.

Godwin said she switched careers because, "No. 1, it was no longer challenging, and secondly I felt I'd accomplished what I wanted in the business.

"On the personal side, I decided to stay in St. Louis because I married a St. Louis man. Also, I felt I could use my communication skills to make a difference in a community as opposed to reporting the negatives."

She's married to Sam Hutchinson, founder of St. Louis-based Interface Construction Corp.

The project that launched Vector was an assignment from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In group sessions with the public, Perkins — who holds a doctorate in public policy and organizational development — created a skyline on paper and participants discussed environmental issues in the form of rainclouds and resolutions as fertilizer bags.

Godwin said, "When you make it more understandable, you get better feedback." The EPA project has remained one of Godwin's favorites, having spawned a community-written grant as well as a training manual and video used across the country.

Vector's projects vary widely: a fundraising plan for the Dollar-Help home heating assistance program, producing 36 nursing skills videos for Mosby Inc. and involving north St. Louis County residents in the design of a new Route 367 for the Missouri Department of Transportation.

Likewise varied are the awards Godwin has won at Vector, including a Crystal Award of Excellence from the Communicator Awards for a city of St. Louis economic development video and a National Aegis corporate video award for Vector's EPA work.

Godwin earned a bachelor's degree



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BRIAN CASSIDY

from Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., majoring in English literature and American studies, and a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University in New York City.

She entered broadcasting full time in 1982 at the NBC affiliate in Charlottesville, Va., as anchor/reporter and assignment editor.

She joined KETC-TV in St. Louis in 1987, later winning an Emmy for a documentary she produced to generate minority interest in journalism. While at KETC, Godwin hosted and produced the weekly minority affairs program Postscript, for which she won an Emmy.

She joined KPLR-TV in 1990, where she was a news anchor and reporter. She was KPLR's director of public affairs and hosted St. Louis Agenda, for which she received an Emmy and an award from the Greater St. Louis Association of Black Journalists.

Godwin is chairman of the board of trustees of Blackburn College, a liberal arts school of about 630 students in Carlinville, Ill. "It's one of only six work colleges in the U.S. where students work on campus," she said. "I just love it."

Her love for the college has driven her work to improve its situation. Godwin said six or seven years ago, the college was in a financial crisis and considered shutting down. During Godwin's tenure, Blackburn more than doubled the targeted \$8.5 million of a just-completed capital campaign, and the college opened the first new buildings on campus in 30 years.

Blackburn President Miriam "Mim" Pride said that Godwin brought the college "a sense of professionalism and mission that attracted folks to us and kept folks with us."

Godwin will serve on the Illinois Community College Board until 2005, overseeing the state's 49 community colleges. She's also a member of board of the United Way of Greater St. Louis, the St. Louis Black Leadership Roundtable and the Girl Scout Council of Greater St. Louis. Godwin will co-chair the 2004 Hiram Leffingwell Awards Luncheon to benefit Forest Park Forever with Patricia Whitaker, president of Arcturus Inc.