

# Clients' Calls For Help Inspires New, Innovative Company

It was clients' calls for help that inspired Larna Godwin and Jessica Perkins to form their own public engagement and communications consulting firm three years ago.

The two entrepreneurs had spent a few years running their own businesses, but when they collaborated on an environmental public engagement project in the summer of 1997, they were amazed at the results. And they weren't the only ones.

Local companies and organizations soon began calling for their unique skills. "We took a step back and said, 'We must have a business here,'" Godwin said. "We were looking at about 1/3 of a million dollars in business before we had even opened our doors," Perkins said.

Their two companies merged, and Vector Communications Corporation (VCC) was born.

As a public engagement company, Vector involves citizens in public policy and dialogue and decision-making. The communications side of the business provides media relations and video production services.

"We joined forces because our skills really complement each other," Godwin said. "We also share the same values. We want to make a difference in the community."

Perkins brings to VCC experience in marketing, finance, public policy, strategic planning, organizational development and graphic facilitation. Godwin brings experience in journalism, public affairs, media relations, video production and event planning.

"We each have diverse experiences that we

can bring to clients," Perkins said. "When you are setting up a partnership, that's the best of both worlds."

VCC has garnered a diverse list of projects and clients in just three years. For instance, VCC is currently serving as the public engagement prime for the Route 367 Improvement Project, sponsored by Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). Recently, VCC lead the public engagement and communications process for the City of St. Louis' "Washington Avenue Streetscape Project." The project involved designing a new street look for the Washington Avenue Loft District.

The company has also been heavily involved in video production. VCC has recently worked with Mosby Medical Publishing Company, producing nursing skills videos.

The most instrumental project for VCC, however, remains their initial project, the "Listening Tour." The Listening Tour, an environmental public engagement project, is now in its third year of implementation and focuses on finding solutions to environmental issues. The first phase of the project involved venturing out into the community and talking with citizens about their environmental issues. As with the second phase, the third phase involves environmental planning and leadership training for two City of St. Louis neighborhoods.

"We are empowering people so they can take over leadership roles in their community," said Godwin of the Listening Tour.

As its work on the Listening Tour demon-

strated, the company's ability to offer new, creative solutions was a big hit with clients. "We have marketed ourselves as a high-quality firm that looks at a problem differently than some other companies," Perkins said. "We are creating new solutions to public policy decisions."

Godwin and Perkins are excited about the company's future.

Said Godwin, "We will continue to make a difference in the community. We certainly want to grow, but we want to grow slowly and wisely."

## African-American Success Story



*Larna Godwin, left, and Jessica Perkins began Vector Communications Corporation, a public engagement and communications consulting firm, three years ago.*