

CommWorld Celebrates 30 Years



by Cheryl Ann Willis • Contributing Writer

How can two people from surprisingly different backgrounds build a hugely successful business? Meet Bob and Linda Bennett, owners of CommWorld of Kansas City, located in Grandview.

From her earliest childhood Linda, of Lee's Summit, wanted to be an actress. She majored in theatre at University of Kansas but soon realized it was not a fit. For several years she taught speech, mass media and theatre to students with the same love at the former Grandview East Junior High.

Born in Ironton, Missouri, Bob followed Dad's practical life advice to his seven siblings.

"My concept was that if I treat people right, if I do things right and put great effort into whatever I do, then whatever I do is going to turn out okay. I did not have any aspirations."

He left home at 17, eventually joined the Air Force and then used his military electronics and communications skills in the workforce.

Bob and Linda met in 1975 through mutual friends. They married two years later.

"When I met Linda I was employed but by our first date I was a student," Bob shares. "I decided to use my GI Bill before it expired. From Longview Community College, the

man who attended a one room school house in first grade continued to earn an MBA from University of Missouri Kansas City.

After his graduation, Bob convinced Linda that "she could go further and do more in the business world." She has proven it so.

But the first business partnership ended in failure.

"It just seemed like everything was going south for us," Bob says.

"Things around our house were breaking," Linda continues. "We weren't running the air conditioning to save money but every window had been painted shut. They were actually breaking while we tried to open them.

A month after the business failed, Linda's father hired them to paint houses for his handyman business. Bob tells of a pivotal point in their journey at that time when they read Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*.

"We both read that book and started the goal list. That's when goal setting became real to us. I thought, you know, this will work if I want it to. We believed it. When you're at the bottom you just have to look up. We've scratched off over a page of those goals, including owning our own business."

A few weeks later Bob answered an ad to manage the Kansas City branch of CommWorld.

"I started CommWorld of Kansas City on October 19, 1981. A few months later they decided to franchise. Linda and I bought the first franchise offered. At its peak CommWorld had 68 offices nationwide. We were always in the top three. Linda and I helped sell the concept and developed the sales program for the whole network."

"Before I met Bob, I had a negative impression of sales people that they were just trying to get me to buy something I didn't need or want. He taught me that the profession of sales is honorable, that a good sales person is looking out for the best interest of clients. A good sales person's goal is to get clients what they really need and/or want even when they don't know what they need or want. That's very true in our industry because most people don't buy phone systems everyday. So we have to guide them. We've been privileged to be part of organizations like the Helzburg Entrepreneur Mentoring Program."

Bob continues, "The first twenty years Linda and I did not join many organizations. We put our nose to the ground and decided

we were going to run an excellent company that makes sure all customers are taken care of. In 2001, we were impressed to get back into the community and start giving back. It's been very good."

CommWorld of Kansas City is celebrating 30 years in October 2011, led by two people who never dreamed about such an accomplishment until just about thirty years ago. Comm World provides phone systems and equipment, voicemail, and all kinds of related products to keep businesses connected to the outside world. When your business is looking for the best and most affordable systems that will keep you connected with seamless communications in and out of the office, Bob and Linda Bennett will discover, with you, the unique plan to make that happen. Contact them at 6200 Main Street, Grandview, Missouri or 816.763.1100.

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