

## *Donhams combine technology, enthusiasm*

By **Kim Dickinson** CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Headquartered in a quaint house at the heart of Decatur, Church Street Design welcomes its clients to a traditional home atmosphere that provides a different twist from high-profile design firms. Founded by Victor Donham in January 1988, Church Street Design was one of the first graphic design companies in the Southeast to begin using electronic design technology.

"If the industry went the way we thought it might — and it's done so about twice as fast as we predicted — then it would be possible to have a turnkey creative firm . . . and it worked," says Lynn Donham, director of creative services and Victor's wife.

Church Street Design handles graphics and all areas of print communications for educational, non-profit and corporate clients such as Emory University, Sewanee (The University of the South), The Coca-Cola Co., HBO & Co. and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. The company also operates a 24-hour Postscript imaging service bureau with night drop-off.

In the beginning, Church Street Design shared its house office with a private detective and a lawn service, working out of three sparsely furnished rooms.

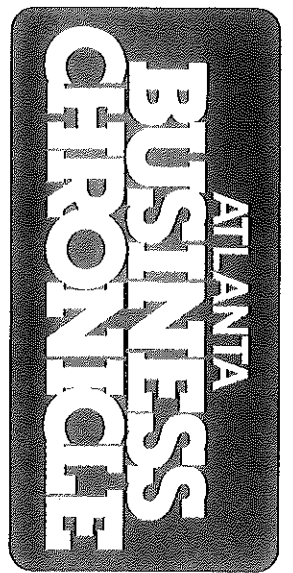
Lynn Donham attributes the company's initial success to her husband. "It was really Vic's leadership and tenacity that allowed us to survive the first two years," she says.

Victor Donham knew that in order for the company to survive, he would have to live and work with the bare essentials. For the first year of business, his office was furnished simply with a secondhand desk, chair and a Macintosh computer. Because there was no filing cabinet, he covered the floor with small stacks of papers.

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# Church Street's down-home design

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## *Small Business* **Strategies**

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**No picket fence:** Lynn & Victor Donham outside the Church Street Design office

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## Design

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The company carefully recruited its employers. The Donhams say they did not simply want good designers — they wanted versatile people who could write, design, conceptualize and relate to clients.

“We run a company that nurtures the emotional and creative sides of people, and challenges them to really do their best,” says Lynn Donham.

Now in its seventh year of business, Church Street Design has experienced an incredible rate of growth — with yearly revenues of \$830,000 in 1993 and \$688,000 in 1992. Unlike most small firms, Church Street Design rarely has to send a project off the grounds until it goes to press.

To Lynn and Victor Donham, starting their own business has allowed a satisfying balance and created a chal-

lenge in their lives.

“It’s given us a chance to take responsibility for our lives and to give our fam-

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### Church Street Designs

**What it does:**  
Graphic design and print  
communications

**When founded:** 1988

**Number of employees:** 7

**Biggest start-up challenge:**  
Believing they could achieve success

ily and the people who work for us the opportunity to make their own choices,” Lynn Donham says. □