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PRESIDENT OF THE THUNDER AND THE WINGNUTS

Arena, coliseum name their new manager

BY DEB GRUVER
The Wichita Eagle

The new general manager of Intrust Bank Arena and the Kansas Coliseum says he hopes to keep both venues full by pairing good customer service with quality events.

Chris Presson, known to many in Wichita for his connection to sports teams, started as general manager of the arena and coliseum Monday. He

will be employed by SMG, the private management company hired by Sedgwick County.

Presson described himself to county officials and the media Monday as a hard worker who doesn't settle for average.

He recently left his post with Wichita Pro Sports, under which he was president of the Wichita Thunder and the Wichita Wingnuts. He still is a minority owner of the Wingnuts but said he plans

to divest himself of that business interest because he considers it a "bit of a conflict of interest."

Gary Desjardins, SMG regional general manager based out of Oklahoma City, introduced Presson on Monday.

Desjardins said he and Presson had sat at opposite ends of the table at various points in their careers — with competing interests — and he knows



Presson

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Presson is dogged.

"Today is a wonderful day for SMG and Sedgwick County," Desjardins said.

Presson said his job as general manager will be to maximize use of the arena and Coliseum.

The arena should bring a "new level of excitement" and entertainment to the area, he said. "I promise you we'll do great things."

Presson, 42, earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and broadcasting at Oklahoma State University in 1992.

He has worked as general manager for several professional hockey teams, including the Topeka Scarecrows and the Oklahoma City Blazers.

He also is a sports marketing professor at Wichita State University.

Presson said he will spend the next 30 days evaluating where his focus initially should be — on the opening of the arena (expected in 2010) or at the Coliseum.

"We have to look at what the Coliseum has done for us in the past and what it can do for us in the future," he said.

The county hasn't yet decided what to do with the Coliseum.