

Trade Talk

Piedmont Is Going to Use Sunbird

THE PIEDMONT Airlines name is going to reappear on planes serving Smith Reynolds Airport here.

But it's not because the big jets are returning. It's because of a change in marketing.

Sunbird Airlines, the commuter airline that has served Smith Reynolds since 1982, is going to be called The Piedmont Commuter beginning May 1.

Sunbird's six planes will be painted with Piedmont's colors and logo, said Jan Bennett, the director of Sunbird's sales and traffic in Charlotte.

What this means is that people flying out of Smith Reynolds and connecting with flights in Charlotte will fly Piedmont all the way through, she said.

"It's the way the industry's going," she said. "Major carriers are wanting more feed from the smaller carriers, and the way to do that is to give us their designation."

Sunbird Airlines remains its own corporate entity, said Kenneth Carlson, a Piedmont spokesman. But now Sunbird will be part of Piedmont's timetable and will be carried under Piedmont's two-letter reservation code.

Sunbird also serves Asheville, Greenville, Hickory and Raleigh-Durham airports, as well as Anderson and Greenville-Spartanburg, S.C., and Athens and Atlanta, Ga.

Coincidentally, just this week Air Virginia and American Airlines announced the same arrangement out of Charlotte, changing the name of the Virginia commuter to American Eagle.

American Eagle, beginning May 15, will increase its daily flights in Charlotte from two to 14. Air Virginia, based in Lynchburg, Va., serves 15 cities.

ing on the campaign for about 18 months.