

NEW FLYER: Air Star applies to run charters

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JERRY ANGEL: Air Star's senior vice president.

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Winston-Salem may soon become home to a second charter airline started by a former Piedmont Airlines executive.

Jerry Angel, a former manager of baggage handling and ground services at Piedmont, left Leisure Air as vice president of technical operations in August. Recently, he teamed up with Nohar Singh, who is from South America, to form Surplus Air Inc. The company will operate as Air Star International.

The new company has hired 10 pilots and 15 flight attendants and leased

a 4-year-old 757 jet from Ansett, an Australian airline. Like Leisure Air, Air Star would have an operations center in Winston-Salem, though not necessarily on the grounds of Smith Reynolds Airport, Angel said.

Angel is Air Star's senior vice president and general manager. He expects to hire a local staff of 10. The company is operating out of temporary office space at Brownsboro Plaza shopping center on Brownsboro Road.

Air Star is seeking approval from the Federal Aviation Administration to run charter flights from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport to the Caribbean.

That would make Air Star a direct competitor of Leisure Air, Winston-Salem's other charter airline company. Leisure Air has been struggling to overcome financial problems and recently started flying again after suspending its operations because of safety violations.

Leisure Air's difficulties may provide an opportunity for rivals in the highly competitive charter tour business. Norman Manzione, a marketing executive at SunTrips, a California tour operator and one of Leisure Air's biggest customers, said that his com-

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pany is asking Leisure Air to repay several million dollars that SunTrips had advanced the airline for flights interrupted by the suspension.

Leisure Air has had to defer part of workers' pay since the suspension because of a cash crunch. The airline is operating four new A320s jets and has mothballed a 757 and two DC-10s.

This past week, mechanics at Triad International Maintenance Corp. were preparing Air Star's 757 for flight certification at Piedmont Triad International Airport in Greensboro.

Angel said he expects the FAA to grant approval in about two weeks.

"We're looking to run four to five flights a week beginning in late December," he said.

Angel said he hopes to avoid operations and maintenance problems by sticking to one type of aircraft and using fairly new airplanes.

Up until a few weeks ago, Angel said, he and Singh, the company's chairman and chief executive, intended to call the airline Leisure Jet, but recently changed the name after Leisure Air suspended operations.

"We didn't want any confusion," he said.

Angel declined to discuss the

company's source of financing. He said that the company has booked a sufficient backlog of paid seats from unnamed tour operators.

Angel declined to provide details about Singh, other than to say that he is from Georgetown, Guyana's capital.

Guyana is east of Venezuela and north of Brazil.