

Next naturalization ceremony to have added emphasis

BY ROY WENZL
The Wichita Eagle

The nearly 100 people who plan to gather at Intrust Bank Arena next week each started life in one of 36 countries other than the U.S.

On Monday, in a ceremony that the Wichita Rotary Club and others are energizing to make a point, the group, having studied hard and worked for years toward this event, will renounce their citizenship from their native lands and swear allegiance to the United States.

There have been many such naturalization ceremonies in Wichita, most of them most recently at Century II; ceremonies take place every other month, and the next are scheduled for March 28, May 16, July 18, Sept. 19 and Nov. 14, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in Wichita.

But the one on Monday will take on added emphasis. Rotarians decided this year to fund a ceremony at Intrust and to add more dash and color to heighten local appreciation for what it takes to achieve citizenship, said Roger Ramseyer, one of the organizers.

Neeli Bendapudi, dean of

the University of Kansas School of Business and a naturalized citizen, will be the featured speaker.

The McConnell Air Force Base color guard will be there, along with Col. Joel D. Jackson, commander of the 22nd Air Refueling Wing at McConnell. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts have been invited. Students and church groups have been invited; the public is invited.

The new citizens will include people from countries long regarded as allies, such as the Philippines, Spain, Taiwan, India, Canada and Israel. And they come from countries who have been adversaries: Vietnam, Germany, Iran, China, Cuba. And they come from countries remote from us: Tanzania, Thailand, Senegal, Kenya, Laos, Mongolia.

The ceremony will be at 7 p.m. Monday. Intrust will be open at the north and south entrances.