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## **Kansas City Pro Volleyball Names Former Player and Sports Leader Lori Thomas as President**

**KANSAS CITY, MO (December 7, 2023)** – Today, Kansas City Pro Volleyball announced Lori Thomas, Commissioner of the Heart of America Athletic Conference, will become Team President February 1. She will lead business operations for the club, which include hiring and managing a full-time staff, creating a fan-focused strategic plan and representing the team at the league level.

A native Kansas Citian, Lori played volleyball for Johnson County Community College and was recognized as a Junior College All-American in volleyball in 1988. She also participated in two seasons of volleyball at Idaho State University before moving to Kieldrecht, Belgium to play professional volleyball for a year. Upon returning to the United States, Lori began coaching and served as an assistant volleyball coach at Missouri State (1993-1996) and the University of Tulsa (1996-1998). In 1997, Lori played for Kansas City Lightning which was the first professional volleyball team in Kansas City.

“Volleyball has played a significant part of my life; and my experiences as an athlete, coach and administrator not only reaffirmed my passion for the sport but provided me with professional skills I use every day,” says Thomas. “As President for Kansas City Pro Volleyball, I’m excited for Kansas City to experience the dynamic and engaging sport that fosters a sense of community. We can’t wait to bring Kansas City some of the best volleyball we have ever seen in the United States.”

In 1998, Lori joined the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and quickly advanced from a marketing assistant to her final position as Senior Vice President for Membership and Character Initiatives. During her time at the NAIA, she built the organization’s first human resources department and played a pivotal role in bringing the office headquarters from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Olathe, KS, and eventually downtown Kansas City.

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“Lori is a well-respected and trusted leader in the volleyball community and Kansas City,” says Missy McCarthy, Co-Owner and CEO of Kansas City Pro Volleyball. “Her ability to engage with athletes, coaches and fans, along with her vision and commitment to make KC Pro Volleyball a premier team, are just a few of the reasons she’s the right person to launch Kansas City Pro Volleyball.”

Lori made history in 2004 when she became the first female commissioner for the NAIA. As the leader of the Heart of America Athletic Conference, she completed a rebrand of the conference, led the 1<sup>st</sup> ever ESPN “game of the week” for football, increased the slate of championships sports to 26, developed the Heart Conference Network, Heart Association of Student-Athletes and most recently partnered with Wellness U which offers every Heart student-athlete (7,000) a mobile app that provides mental wellness resources.

“The naming of Lori Thomas as President of Kansas City Pro Volleyball is indicative of Missy and Kent McCarthy’s commitment to bringing the highest level of excellence to Pro Volleyball Federation and their franchise,” said Dave Whinham, Co-Founder of the League. “Lori Thomas brings with her the respect of both the business and volleyball communities and will establish and lead a world class professional sports program that Kansas City will be proud to support.”

Inducted into both the National Junior College Athletics Association Hall of Fame and Johnson County Community College Hall of Fame, Lori was also honored with an induction into Idaho State University's Hall of Fame for volleyball and basketball. In 2015, Thomas was selected as the Women Leaders in College Sports "Administrator of the Year". She will be inducted into the NAIA Hall of Fame in April 2024 for Meritorious Service.

“Kansas City Pro Volleyball’s announcement was met with incredible excitement by the Kansas City community,” says Kathy Nelson, President and CEO of the Kansas City Sports Commission, WIN for KC and Visit KC. “Fans should be equally delighted Lori Thomas is leading the development of this new professional team.”

Future announcements expected in the coming months include additional hires, the selection of a venue and updates on a name and brand. Lori’s head shot is available [here](#). For more information, please visit [www.kcprovolleyball.com](http://www.kcprovolleyball.com).

#### **ABOUT PRO VOLLEYBALL FEDERATION**

Pro Volleyball Federation is *REAL PRO VOLLEYBALL* and the premier women’s professional volleyball league in North America. Pro Volleyball Federation will begin play in January 2024 with world class players and coaches, including some of America’s greatest volleyball players and elite players from around the world. Our entire focus is on ensuring that our level and quality of play, our treatment of players, the quality of our event presentations, and our day-to-day fan experience is world class and the very best offered in North America. For more information, visit [ProVolleyball.com](http://ProVolleyball.com).

#### **About The Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation**

The mission of the [Kansas City Sports Commission & Foundation](#) is to drive Kansas City’s overall sports strategy, to enrich the quality of life, create economic impact and raise visibility for our region. As a privately-funded nonprofit, we are entirely dependent on your support. For the latest on Kansas City Sports Commission news, follow on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). Also follow the Garmin Kansas City Marathon on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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**About WIN for KC**

The Women's Intersport Network for Kansas City (WIN for KC), was established in 1994 under the umbrella of the Greater Kansas City Sports Commission, with the mission to ignite girls and women through advocating and promoting the lifetime value of sports and fitness, while providing opportunities for participation and leadership development. WIN is a volunteer, membership-driven organization that operates as a program of the Kansas City Sports Commission and Foundation. For more information, visit [WINforKC.org](http://WINforKC.org). For the latest on WIN for KC news, follow on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).