

Columbus among top places to raise family



ANDREW LAKER | THE REPUBLIC

Lori Rosenthal, top, watches as her adopted children Yana, 6, right, and Alyona, 10, goof around on the playset in their backyard Sept. 8. Forbes magazine has ranked Columbus among its top 10 best small cities to raise a family.

Forbes ranks city 10th on national list

By PAUL MINNIS

pminnis@therepublic.com

Columbus has been ranked by a nationally known magazine as among the best small cities in the country to raise a family.

Forbes.com ranked Columbus 10th out of 126 cities they studied with a population of 100,000 or less.

It used as criteria the cities' commute times, graduation rates, median household incomes and home-ownership rates.

"It's not surprising; we do so many of the fundamentals well," said Jack Hess, president of Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce.

He said the fact that Columbus ranked especially well in median household income is proof that the city to some degree has made itself a place where the smartest and ablest come to live.

Forbes.com acknowledges that many unrankable factors contribute to a person's decision where to raise a family.

But it adds that the criteria chosen often play into those decisions.

"We looked at quality-of-life measures that make living easier for families," Forbes states.

The Midwest dominated the list. Cities in Wisconsin and Michigan hold five of the top six spots, and Columbus is the sole Indiana community in the top 10.

Outside looking in

Mayor Fred Armstrong said such recognition helps people on the outside see how much this community has to offer.

Jason Hester, executive director of Columbus Economic Development Board, said his effort to attract businesses is enhanced

when he can point to an unbiased source that this is a great community to call home.

"We've had a great history of welcoming families," said Lynn Lucas, director of Columbus Area Visitors Center. "The effect of awards can't be overstated."

She said Visitors Center officials watch its website for a "bump" in page views when the city earns some new recognition.

That was the case in 2004, when Columbus was named as one of the 10 "Most Playful Towns" by Nick Jr. Family Magazine.

It also was the case in 2005, when GQ Magazine named Columbus one of the "62 Reasons to Love your Country," and in 2009, when an AOL travel website named it among the top U.S. "places to visit before you die."

See **TOP 10** on Back Page

HOW WE RANKED



COMMUTE TIME
45th of 126



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE
27th of 126



HOUSEHOLD INCOME
9th of 126

COST OF LIVING
55th of 126



HOME OWNERSHIP RATE
28th of 126

Top 10

Forbes.com has ranked these cities as the top 10 best small cities to raise a family:

1. Dubuque, Iowa
2. Manitowoc, Wis.
3. Marquette, Mich.
4. Midland, Mich.
5. Marshfield, Wis.
6. Stevens Point, Wis.
7. Casper, Wyo.
8. Quincy, Ill.
9. Helena, Mont.
10. Columbus, Ind.

Source: Forbes.com

TOP 10

Continued from Page One

City Councilman George Dutro said Columbus' only advantage over many other communities is its quality of life.

People can give their children a solid education, for example, and enjoy a quality park system.

"The types of economic development we have are knowledgeable workers, creative people, engineers and

technicians.

"Those types of people and operations can be anywhere in the world, but they're here in Columbus."

Mark Land, spokesman for Cummins Inc., said Cummins looks at a lot of factors when it decides where to expand its operations.

One of the primary ones is quality of life, which he said certainly played into Cum-

mins' announcement Tuesday that it will add 350 new professional jobs in the next 18 months.

The company plans to purchase First Financial Bank's office building at Fifth and Washington streets to house the workers.

"If you are going to attract great people, you want a great community for them," Land said.