

## communityprofile



Columbus towers over the Scioto River. Bottom left is the new Center of Science and Industry (COSI). The tall spire in the center is the Leveque Tower. The tallest buildings to the right are the Huntington Building and the Riffe Center.

**Discovering Columbus** In Ohio's growing capital city, physicians have found opportunity in small and large settings, and plenty to do after hours.

*By Pamela Prescott*

WHERE ELSE CAN YOU SEE BUSHES SNIPPED to look like a post-impressionistic painting, visit the zoo that brought forth the first gorilla born in captivity, and know that the citizens' ingenuity created banana splits, 24-hour banking machines, and Xerox machines?

"Columbus is a town in which almost anything is likely to happen and in which almost everything has," wrote one of America's favorite humorists,

James Thurber, who was born and raised in Ohio's capital city.

While he never claimed to be a visionary, Thurber's description still fits Columbus nearly four decades after the writer's death. Columbus is the largest city in the Buckeye State and the only midwestern city to consistently rank among the 50 fastest-growing U.S. cities in *INC. Magazine's* annual survey. The city is home to five Fortune 500 companies and has leading high-tech scientific and technical information

companies such as CompuServe's headquarters and Bell Laboratories and Lucent Technologies facilities, as well as Battelle Memorial Institute, incubator of many high-tech ideas and one of the largest private research organizations in the world. Progress and innovation are part of the everyday vocabulary of Columbus, making it still entirely possible that almost anything can happen here—bushes can even be made to resemble a painting.

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*ABOVE, The topiary recreation of Seurat's "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of la Grande Jatte" at Columbus' Topiary Garden.*



*LEFT, Orton Hall on the OSU campus, was completed in 1893. The stones of the geology building's facade reflect the layers of Ohio's bedrock—oldest at the bottom, youngest at the top.*

*BELOW, German Village Historic District, just south of downtown.*

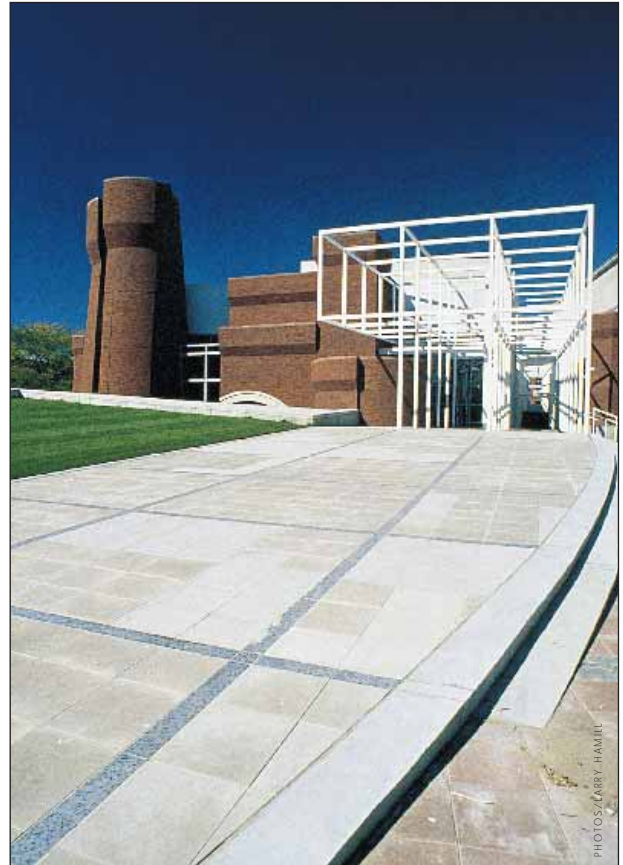
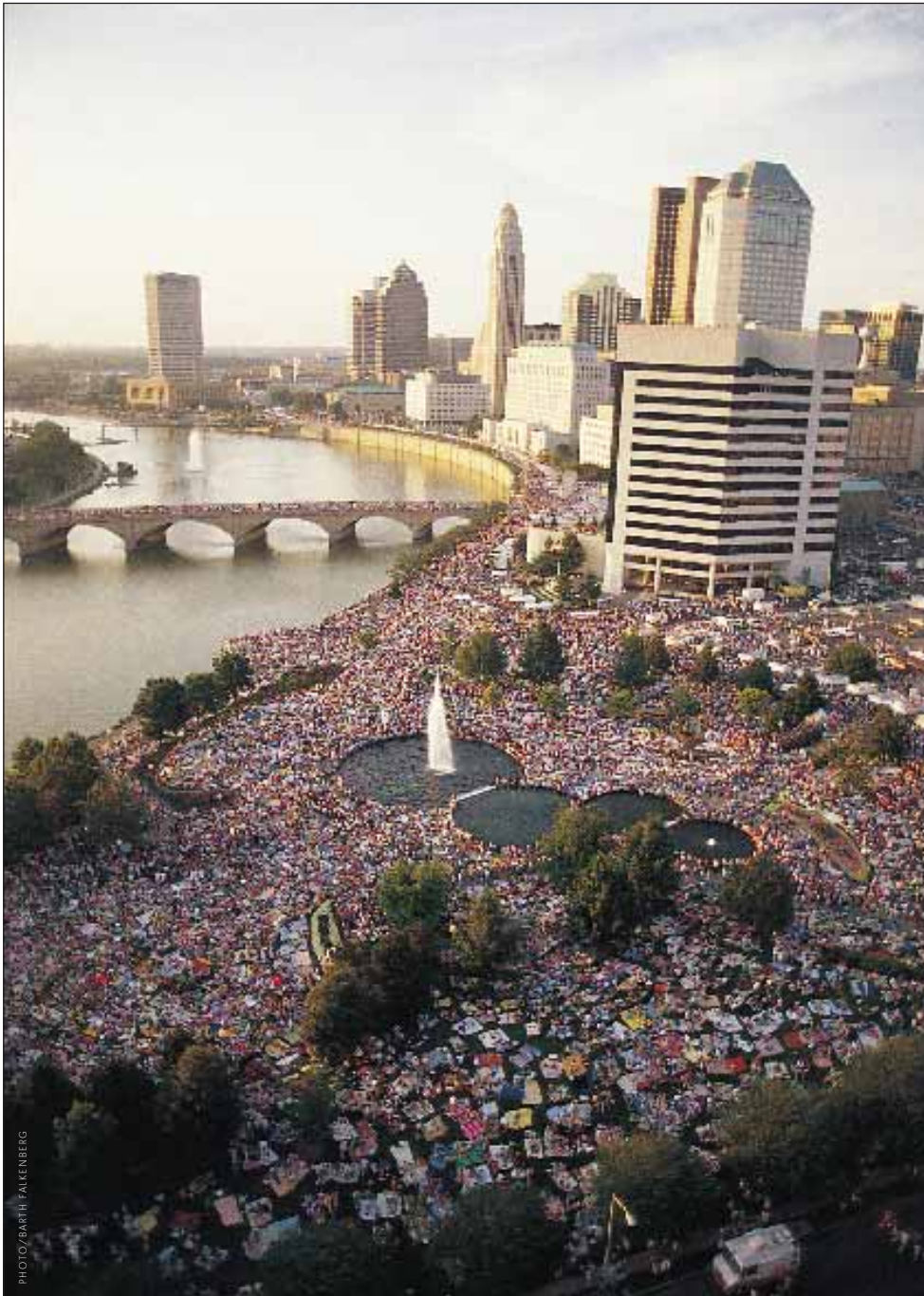


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LEFT, The people gather along the riverfront for Red, White, and Boom, Columbus' annual Independence Day Festival.

**POPULATION:**

Columbus: 657,053  
 MSA (Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Licking, Madison, and Pickaway counties): 1,447,646

**CLIMATE:**

Annual rainfall: 39"  
 Annual snowfall: 27"  
 Average High/Low Temperatures:  
 January - 34°/19°, July - 84°/63°  
 Days of sunshine: 181

**TRANSPORTATION:**

**AIRPORTS** - 23 domestic and international airlines at Port Columbus International Airport; Rickenbacker International Airport is a state-of-the-art cargo airport; Don Scott Field and Bolton Field provide general aviation facilities

**RAIL** - Amtrak

**BUS** - Greyhound Bus Lines; Central Ohio Transit Authority public transit

**INTERSTATES** - Interstate 71 (north-south) and Interstate 70 (east-west) intersect in the city; I-270 is a bypass, and I-670 is a downtown innerbelt.

Mileage to other cities:

- Cleveland - 139
- Cincinnati - 106
- Chicago - 311
- Indianapolis - 170
- Pittsburgh - 182
- Toronto - 436
- Washington, D.C. - 431

**COST OF LIVING:**

105.1 (100 is average)  
 Average home price: \$138,000  
 Median Household Income: \$33,302

The bushes resembling a painting can be found at Columbus' Topiary Garden, which features the only topiary recreation of Georges Seurat's painting, "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte."

**Three heads of health**

Mimi Ghosh, MD, finds Columbus full

of opportunities for a family practice physician. She works solo in her office, but she's employed by MedOhio, a primary-care group practice of about 30 physicians associated with The Ohio State University (OSU). As part of her contract, she's involved in administration, and she lends a hand in marketing for OSU by appearing

on local radio health programs.

"I've had male patients who haven't been to a doctor in years come in because they heard me on the radio," says Ghosh, 31.

Although the majority of her patients are women who see her for gynecological care, she views her work as a

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true family practice. "I have the teen girls because I'm young, and then I have the wives bringing in their husbands for the first time for a checkup as they get into their 40s and middle age. When I have several family members like that, I really get to understand my patients," she says.

Because her practice is affiliated with the university, many of her patients are OSU employees, who are "very knowledgeable, and well-informed" about health care, Ghosh says.

She believes the employee benefits OSU offers enhance the medical care Ghosh can provide. "They have wellness and prevention programs, diabetes management programs, lifestyle and fitness programs. Through the free checkups those programs offer, people might see they have a possible problem and get a referral to me," Ghosh says. "It's a nice connection for everyone, where they feel they're being well taken care of."

Ghosh, a Canadian, practiced locum tenens in Canada before she came to Columbus two years ago. The experience with Canada's national health program prepared her for the challenges posed by managed care in the United States.

"I fought against much different things in Canada," she says, however. "With the government as the only payer, you run into problems of not enough doctors and difficulty scheduling patients for surgeries and other procedures. It's a different kind of frustration," Ghosh says.

While she knows some doctors would feel restricted by the organization of OSU, Ghosh says she likes the checks and balances built into a larger system. It tracks whether she's seeing enough patients and asks patients to evaluate the care her office provides. "Working in the examination rooms all day, it's

hard for me to see the customer feedback on the overall care they get in our office," she says. "If someone 60 years old were coming into this, it would be a difficult situation to adapt to, but I like working for a large organization."

OSU is one of a triumvirate of hospital and medical-care organizations in Columbus. It owns OSU Medical Center on the university's main campus, OSU Hospital East, formerly Park Medical Center, OSU Hospital Harding, a behavioral and mental-health services facility in Worthington on the northern outskirts of Columbus, and the Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Research Institute, one of only 34 National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers in the nation. Through its OSU Health Network, the university is affiliated with six hospitals and one clinic in smaller communities in the state.

OhioHealth is another health-care leader here, with four hospitals in the city and seven in outlying communities. It acquired Doctors Hospital in 1998, an osteopathic teaching hospital with two campuses. OhioHealth also owns the two Grant/Riverside Methodist Hospitals.

Finally, Mt. Carmel comprises Mt. Carmel East, Mt. Carmel West, and St. Ann's hospitals.

"Basically, there are three big camps that people work for," Ghosh says of the Columbus medical community. In fact, her husband, David Groen, MD, is a family physician associated with Mt. Carmel. "I think it really broadens our horizons to know people from these two very large corporations," Ghosh says.

### **Taste testing for the midwest**

Ghosh and her husband have made a promise to limit their time in the office. "It's a tough call when you're young like

we are. We could easily work 14 to 16 hours a day, but with both of us in the same kind of work, we have to set some limits so we can have time together," she says.

Besides, if they worked all the time, they wouldn't get to enjoy all that Columbus has to offer.

"Columbus is really fun. It's a very young town, very white collar, with lots of people in the insurance, medical, and legal professions. There's a very large service community that caters to people like us. We still get home too late to cook dinner, but that's OK, because there are lots of great restaurants."

Columbus enjoys the privilege of being a test market for new restaurant chains and fast food products. "Our tastes are considered the norm for the Midwest, so they test market all these fabulous restaurants, and it's great," says JoAnn Ort, the director of regional network services for OSU Health Network.

Another attraction with the late-working professional crowd in mind is Easton Town Center, a shopping center that opened in July and features the 40,000-square-foot GameWorks. GameWorks is a multi-level entertainment center with more than 250 games that also offers a diverse menu and drinks provided by the full-service GameWorks Grill and two bars. Among its diversions is a virtual reality roller coaster and the Vertical Reality, a four-story game that has seated players ascend a building with each target they kill until they get a chance to blast a helicopter from the sky. The Indy 500 simulation allows up to 10 people to race each other. A carnival area lets players win prizes, and the Adventure Zone offers some of the gorier games in the industry. Designed for the 18- to 40-year-old crowd, GameWorks' motto

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is "Life's a game. It's meant to be played."

"Easton's a fun place to go to meet friends. It's casual and you can just hang out and play games in an adult setting," Ghosh says.

Easton Town Center was developed by Columbus' entrepreneurial legend Leslie H. Wexner, who founded The Limited, Inc. apparel empire in 1963, when he opened a single store in a local mall. His influence has grown to more than 3,012 stores and 13 retail businesses, including The Limited stores, Express, Lerner New York, Lane Bryant, Henri Bendel, Victoria's Secret, Bath & Body Works, and Abercrombie & Fitch.

In addition, he's developed the planned community of New Albany, a new eastern suburb near Port Columbus International Airport that features Georgian architecture, white fences, and rolling, open green spaces. In the city, just east of OSU campus, he's responsible for the Wexner Center for the Arts, a venue for dance, film, music, theater, and video productions and exhibits.

### **Honestly Capitol**

Downtown Columbus is the city's cultural and political hub. Art galleries, the restored German Village—home to Columbus' largest ethnic group in the 1800s—plus a non-stop lineup of summer music and ethnic festivals and the Red, White and Boom Independence Day celebration attract Columbusites of all ages.

Downtown, the Scioto riverfront is home to a full-size replica of Christopher Columbus' flagship the Santa Maria. The boat was commissioned, and the river dredged for its mooring, as part of the city's 1992 quincentennial celebration of Columbus' discovery of America. Not far from downtown is the Ohio State

Fairgrounds, home of the Ohio State Fair, the biggest "festival" of them all.

The Ohio State Capitol, which marks the heart of early Columbus, is a fine example of Greek Revival architecture and was described by Frank Lloyd Wright as "the most honest of state capitols," for its simple beauty. First occupied in 1861, it took 22 years to complete, its construction stalled several years because of a cholera epidemic.

Other downtown attractions include two lavishly restored baroque theaters that originally opened in the 1920s. The Palace Theater now houses Opera Columbus and presents touring Broadway musicals as well as plays, concerts, and films. The Ohio Theater, the busiest performing arts facility in Ohio, is home to the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, BalletMet Columbus, a Broadway comedy and musical series, and presentations sponsored by the Columbus Association for Performing Arts.

David G. Stainbrook, Jr., DO, says he sometimes feels bad that he and his wife no longer take advantage of the cultural offerings of Columbus. Former residents of the restored Victorian Village neighborhood near downtown, they now have three small children and live in the eastern suburb of Gahanna.

They still go to the symphony occasionally, but Stainbrook says they're more likely to go to the Columbus Zoo, which this summer opened its Manatee Coast exhibit, one of only three outside the state of Florida to feature the rare marine animal. The zoo also is known for housing the world's largest reptile collection and for the baby gorilla born there in 1956, the first ever born in captivity and one of four generations of gorilla-

las to live at the Columbus Zoo.

The downtown Center of Science and Industry (COSI) is also popular with his children, says 33-year-old Stainbrook, because of its hands-on, interactive exhibits. Scheduled to open in November is the new COSI, a \$125 million facility built on the foundation of the old Central High School building on the downtown riverfront. Its exhibits include an Ocean World featuring a simulated shipwreck and a dive tank, an Adventure World featuring a puzzle at an archeological dig, and a Wired World with classic computer arcade games.

Also new to the downtown riverfront is the \$150 million Nationwide Arena, to open in mid-2000 as home to the National Hockey League's expansion team, the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"We already have season tickets," Stainbrook says.

But the best thing going on in Columbus is OSU Buckeye football, according to Stainbrook. "You'd be completely remiss if you had visitors and didn't take them to an OSU game."

Even Ghosh, who grew up in Canada, "where college football is not good," is swept away by OSU. "Buckeye football is just larger than life. Here you have 90,000 people in a stadium cheering on these kids down on the field. It's just a really wholesome, fun thing to do on a Saturday afternoon.

### **Independent opportunities**

Jacqueline Amico, MD, also likes to join the crowds for Saturday afternoon football in Columbus. But to join the many physicians who work within the large medical organizations of Columbus is a step she has resisted in her eight years of practice. Instead, the internist runs her own practice with one partner. Expecting her first child in January,

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Amico is searching for a third partner to join the practice.

Working 12- to 16-hour days, Amico admits to being “so busy I can’t see straight.” But she won’t have it any other way. Her practice was begun over 30 years ago by her father, now retired.

“It was one of those things that since I was in second grade, I knew I wanted to be a doctor and join my dad in his practice,” says Amico, 38. Her offices are in the home where she grew up. Her father, an anesthesiologist who also did family practice, started out by converting the family garage into a medical office, then gradually remodeled and added on to the house for more treatment rooms.

Amico did relinquish some control over her practice in 1996, when she helped form Central Ohio Primary Care, a consortium of private practices that collaborate for a centralized billing office, managed-care contracts, and malpractice insurance coverage. “We do get better leverage and rates, but I miss making all those decisions myself,”

Amico says.

Amico sees no disadvantage to being in a small practice in Columbus. “All those programs that OhioHealth and OSU and Mt. Carmel have, they’re all available to me too. I’ve got the best of everything because I can send my patients anywhere, based on the patient’s preference, and now, more often, on insurance requirements,” Amico says. “Columbus is a really nice market with

lots of good doctors in it. You don’t have to go to just one place to get good care.”

Stainbrook, a rheumatologist, also marches to the beat of his own drum, running a solo practice in Gahanna where he lives. On a weekly basis he also visits a satellite office in Lancaster, 20 miles southeast, and in Zanesville, 60 miles to the east.

A native of Zanesville, he says he interviewed for positions in other states, but came back to the Columbus area three years ago to be close to family and because he wanted to continue his association with Doctors Hospital, where he had his residency.

“Doctors Hospital helped me start up my practice by co-signing loans for me. They’ve been wonderful,” Stainbrook says.

With just 13 rheumatologists in Columbus, Stainbrook believes the market is still underserved in his specialty. “This is a growing community, and eventually, everyone’s going to get arthritis,” he says.

The thriving community of Columbus provides options for other specialties as well. Whether their niche is in larger organizations or in small private practices, physicians who come to Ohio’s capital will find that almost anything is likely. ■

*Pam Prescott is a free-lance writer based in Roscoe, Illinois.*