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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
[937-766-8800](tel:937-766-8800) (o)
[937-532-6885](tel:937-532-6885) (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
[@cedarvillenews](#)

Washington Post: Cedarville Is Ohio's "Most Collegiest Town"

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Sometimes the best things come in small sizes.

Just look at Cedarville, Ohio, where the village of 4,340 residents offers quaint stores within walking distance to one of the leading Christian universities in the country — Cedarville University and its 5,082 students. This small but mighty college town caught the attention of the Washington Post, which ranked Cedarville as Ohio's "Most Collegiest College Town."

In describing Ohio's most obvious college town, the Post identifies the village of Cedarville as a town where the university is central to the heartbeat of the community.

Community involvement is an integral part of the college experience for Cedarville's students, and this is seen every day as they study in the two local coffee shops — Beans-N-Cream and Orion — or get late-night ice cream at Mom and Dad's Dairy across from campus. Faculty, staff and students also enjoy celebrating various festivals and holiday events, whether that's fireworks on Labor Day or a horse-drawn carriage ride during the "Little Town of Lights" Christmas festival.

"Cedarville is home to me," said Jill Patrick, a second-year doctoral student in the University's pharmacy program and intern at the CedarCare Village Pharmacy at the crossroads of town. "Because the Doctor of Pharmacy is a seven-year program, I knew it was important to find a school that was right for me, and I chose Cedarville because it tugged on my heart when I first stepped on campus."

As an intern at CedarCare, the teaching pharmacy of Cedarville University's School of Pharmacy, Patrick sees local residents regularly, allowing her to develop relationships with them.

Patrick credits the joint welcome from professors and students, as well as the local community, for her easy transition to college. It is a sentiment echoed by most Cedarville students, who find a large part of Cedarville's appeal is its small-town charm.

Every fall, the university hosts an involvement fair for on-campus activities, clubs and community programs, services and businesses. Grace Baptist Church, the largest church in the village of Cedarville, encourages student involvement and is often seen as an extension of campus culture. Cedarville students participate in weekly services, as well as outreach opportunities that allow them to care for the residents of Cedarville.

While the students embrace the small-town living atmosphere, village residents benefit from the variety of programs offered by Cedarville University. And, if they are not attending an athletic, music or theatre event on campus, many residents can be seen walking their children around Cedar Lake — which is at the center of the academic buildings — or using the fitness center. Even the new Chick-fil-A restaurant on campus is a benefit for students and residents alike.

“My family moved to Cedarville because my dad got a job at the university,” said Myndi Pergram, manager of Beans-N-Cream coffee shop who has lived in Cedarville her entire life. “My parents still live locally and bought the coffee shop in 2000. I used to think I would move away, but when I had my daughter, I realized how much I love the small-town community here. I love that I know all of my regular customers, that we can walk to the local library and that I know everyone at her school.”

But it’s not just the small size and the walkability of town, that makes the village of Cedarville a melting pot of residents and college students and the most collegiest college town in Ohio.

For Cedarville University students, it’s about melding town culture with university culture that sets this small town apart from others. It’s seeing college professors, like Dr. Mark Caleb Smith, chair of the department of history and government, coaching middle school basketball for young Cedarville students. It’s also professors like Dr. John Tarwater, associate professor of finance, watching one of his 11 children on the court.

And there’s great value for the community. This is what makes Cedarville, Ohio, the “most collegiest college town in Ohio.” It is proof that good things can come in small sizes, as the village of Cedarville and Cedarville University have experienced for decades.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 5,082 undergraduate, graduate and high school dual-enrolled students in more than 175 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, high graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement rankings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Written by Halle Johnson

Photo Cutline: The expansive campus of Cedarville University is a part of the quaint Village of Cedarville, Ohio. (Drone Photos by Mark Tucker)