

Youngstown and Arkwright offer respite from urban life

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Business First

If you're tired of the rat race, Youngstown and Arkwright are the ideal communities for you.

Youngstown offers the best quality of life of any small village in Western New York, according to a new study by Business First. And Arkwright ranks first among all rural towns.

The study used 20 statistical indicators to rate the quality of life in every city, town and village across the eight-county region. Those communities were split into five categories, based on size and geography, to produce the final standings.

Results for two of those categories -- small villages and rural towns -- are being released Wednesday.

Full details for all five categories will be available in the summer edition of Western New York Life, a regional magazine published by Business First. It hits newsstands on Friday.

Affluence has some impact on the rankings, which reward places whose residents have large incomes, big homes and college degrees. But high scores are also given for qualities not directly related to earning power, such as racial diversity, short commuting times and the availability of affordable housing.

The overall goal is to identify well-rounded communities -- places that are generally acknowledged to offer an excellent quality of life.

The following is a closer look at the categories being unveiled on Wednesday:

Small villages

John Staschak says that, as far as he's concerned, the most important ingredient for quality of life is "my space, my ability to have room." He's found it in Youngstown, which ranks first among small villages.

The Niagara County village has only 1,900 residents, a total that edges up to 6,900 when the surrounding town, Porter, is folded in. That's the perfect size for Staschak, the

president of Bryant & Stratton College. He also enjoys Youngstown's natural setting -- nestled on the Lake Ontario shoreline at the mouth of the Niagara River.

"I like the water," he says. "We can walk to the Niagara River from our house, and the lake is a mile away. It's just nice to sit on a bench and watch the boats. It's very relaxing."

Youngstown earns points for its low poverty rate and strong sense of community. Three-quarters of its residents have lived in the village for at least five years.

The affluent Cattaraugus County ski resort of Ellicottville holds second place in this category, followed by Elba (Genesee County), Almond (Allegany County) and Allegany (Cattaraugus County). Small villages are defined as villages that have fewer than 10,000 residents and are at least 24 miles from Buffalo.

Here are the top 10 small villages in Western New York Life's rankings:

- 1. Youngstown
- 2. Ellicottville
- 3. Elba
- 4. Almond
- 5. Allegany
- 6. Lakewood
- 7. Wyoming
- 8. Bemus Point
- 9. Mayville
- 10. Portville