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## **FORBES MAGAZINE RANKS COUNTY-OWNED COLUMBUS CLIPPERS AS FOURTH MOST VALUABLE MINOR LEAGUE TEAM IN AMERICA**

Recognizing the valuable impacts professional and amateur sports are having on Central Ohio, Franklin County Commissioners are celebrating a new report from Forbes magazine listing the county-owned Columbus Clippers as one of the most valuable minor league teams in America.

In a story appearing on the magazine's website on Friday, Forbes listed the Columbus Clippers as tied for fourth most valuable among the nation's 160 Minor League Baseball (MiLB) teams.

Franklin County is the only county in the nation to own both a minor league baseball team and the team's baseball stadium.

"National recognition, jobs, and affordable family entertainment are just some of the impacts the Columbus Clippers have on our county," said Franklin County Commissioner President Paula Brooks. "Tourism continues to be one of our county's greatest job generators, with visitor spending adding up to more than \$7.2 billion annually in Central Ohio and reducing the local tax burden on each Franklin County family by about \$1900."

In 1977, the Franklin County Commissioners - led by Commissioner Harold Cooper - purchased a team from Memphis, Tennessee to bring to Columbus, while at the same time allocating additional money to buy and refurbish a baseball stadium.

Today, the Columbus Clippers are the two-time defending Triple-A National Champions, playing in the newly-built Huntington Park, which has been nationally recognized as one of the best baseball stadiums in the country.

"The County's investments in the Clippers and in Huntington Park continue to offer great returns when you look at the economic impact of having the team in our county's downtown center," said Franklin County Commissioner Marilyn Brown. "As an anchor to the Arena District, the stadium not only draws in fans but also supports the retail businesses around it."

The Forbes rankings are based on comparisons of operating income and revenue, attendance, stadium lease costs, and the "spectacular returns" on investment, according to the article.

The magazine estimates the total team value of the Columbus Clippers at \$24 million.

"This is part of the reason Franklin County has been named as one of the best sports counties in the nation," added Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady, pointing to a national sports marketing study that found two-thirds of all Columbus adults are avid sports fans. "We have remained steadfast in making sure a visit to see the Clippers is both family friendly and family affordable."

The Forbes article points to: "Part of the reason that the top-drawing minor league franchises are so successful is that they provide family entertainment at a reasonable price. The average MiLB ticket costs \$7, which is almost four times less expensive than the \$27 average cost of a MLB ticket."

Last year, attendance at Huntington Park reached 608,165 tickets, ranking the Clippers in the top three of attendance figures among the nation's minor league teams.

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The Forbes story can be found online at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/chris-smith/2012/06/08/billionaires-like-warren-buffett-profit-from-minor-league-baseball-ownership/>

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