



PRESS RELEASE

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Waterbury Named One of the Nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People* By America's Promise Alliance and ING

Competition Recognizes Communities Taking Action to Help Reduce Local Dropout Rates and Create Brighter Futures for Young People

Waterbury, Conn.—The efforts of Waterbury civic and community leaders were honored today when America's Promise Alliance (the Alliance), the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to youth and children, announced the city had been named a winner of the Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People (100 Best)* competition presented by ING, a global financial services company and leading provider of retirement plans and programs for teachers. Its 2010 recognition marks the first win for Waterbury in the competition.

The *100 Best* designation recognizes those communities that make youth a priority by implementing programs that help keep children in school and prepare them for college and the 21st century workforce. The competition is open to all communities that make children and youth a priority, including small towns, large cities, counties and school districts. In addition to enhancing local educational opportunities, most winning communities have taken steps to facilitate improved access to health care for its young people, encourage youth civic engagement and supply developmental resources that create better places for young people to live and grow. The entire 2010 list of *100 Best Communities for Young People* and their accomplishments can be found at www.americaspromise.org/100Best.

“Through its innovative and far-reaching programs, Waterbury is taking bold and effective steps to help their young people graduate and lead healthy, productive lives,” said Marguerite W. Kondracke, America's Promise Alliance president and CEO. “Waterbury serves as an example to inspire and educate other communities across the nation to tackle the challenges facing their city and children, and to implement initiatives that give them the essential resources they need to succeed in life.”

Waterbury was named one of the nation's *100 Best* because of its far-reaching, comprehensive plan for youth development called “Bridge to Success—Preparing Waterbury Youth for Life: A Birth to 21 Initiative.” This birth-to-adulthood program is the first of its kind in Connecticut, and it brings community stakeholders from all sectors together to support Waterbury's youth every step of the way to ensure they are successful in school, work and life.

“Bridge to Success” places a high priority on quality out-of-school time programs that are meaningful and engaging for the community’s youth, giving them safe places to spend time before and after school as well as on the weekends. By teaming up with school and community youth service providers, Waterbury has been able to aggressively pursue afterschool grants that have added up to more than \$9.6 million for out-of-school time programs over the past several years, nearly \$5.2 million just since 2007. Adequate affordable health care is a challenge for many Waterbury families. Another major component to the “Bridge to Success” Plan is child health and development, for which Waterbury has developed a tracking system of key indicators to help ensure students enter school healthy and ready to learn.

Mayor Jarjura said, “I am so pleased that Waterbury has been selected as one of the ‘100 Best Communities for Young People’ by the America’s Promise Alliance and ING! This kind of rare and very special acknowledgement is a very fitting celebration of the many Waterbury stakeholders that work together tirelessly for the benefit of Waterbury children and families. This is a very proud moment for Waterbury, on our journey toward achieving success for all Waterbury youth.”

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. David L. Snead commented, “Being named one of ‘America’s 100 Best Communities for Young People’ is very exciting for Waterbury. Waterbury Public Schools has enthusiastically embraced working collaboratively with multiple community-based organizations to prepare students to be successful in school and beyond. Through our joint efforts, we are working to increase the number of students who stay in school and graduate. This ‘100 Best Communities for Young People’ award reminds us of our accomplishments to date, and serves as another call to action to continue the good work for youth underway in the Waterbury community.”

On September 21, 2010, Waterbury and the other winners spanning 37 states were recognized at a ceremony in front of the Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Each of the winning communities was formally recognized with a designation on a map of the U.S., illustrating the geographic and demographic diversity of the winning 100 communities. In addition to the *100 Best* distinction, Waterbury and the other top communities will receive two road signs identifying the city as one of *100 Best*, as well as a trophy to be presented to local officials later this year.

Alliance Chair Alma Powell and President and CEO Marguerite W. Kondracke revealed the list of winners during the national celebration. They were joined by Rhonda Mims, president of the ING Foundation and senior vice president, ING’s Office of Corporate Responsibility and Multicultural Affairs and *Twilight*’s Kellan Lutz, who both share a passion for the development of young people.

“ING is committed to children’s education and to the advancement of education initiatives that prepare them for successful futures,” said Mims. “Our support for *100 Best* demonstrates our goal of honoring communities like Waterbury that produce real, measurable results for improving the lives of young people.”

The competition is one element of the Alliance’s Grad Nation campaign, a 10-year initiative to mobilize all Americans to take action in their communities to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. More than 7,000 students drop out each school day in the U.S., resulting in 1.3 million young people a year. To help decrease these numbers, the Alliance is more committed than ever to recognizing communities – regardless of size, location or history – that are taking real action to help more young people stay in school and graduate on time.

“*100 Best* is an essential building block of an inspiring national movement that gives everyone a chance to ensure every young person graduates,” said Powell. “These winning communities refuse to let the challenges they face be the determining factor in the lives of their children and youth. Instead, they are helping to build an infrastructure of assertive, successful and dynamic young people that are the future of this country.”

About *100 Best*

First held in 2005, *100 Best* honors communities large and small, rural and urban, that are making progress to help young people achieve their potential, which includes earning a high school diploma, securing a good job, and playing an active, productive role in America’s economic vitality. This year, more than 350 communities in 50 states registered online for the *100 Best* distinction at www.americaspromise.org/100best.

Being a *100 Best* community not only demonstrates commitment to local young people; the award fosters local pride, bolsters economic development and shines the spotlight on the people and programs that are building better communities. The competition also facilitates the sharing of best practices among communities nationwide regarding education, access to health care, reading score improvement, youth service and pre-school enrollment, among many other areas.

About America’s Promise Alliance

America’s Promise Alliance is the nation’s largest partnership organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. Through the collective power of our partner network, we raise awareness, support communities and engage in nonpartisan advocacy to ensure that young people receive more of the fundamental resources they need to graduate high school prepared for college, work and life. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, the Alliance believes the success of our young people is grounded in the Five Promises—caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others. For more information about America’s Promise Alliance, visit www.americaspromise.org.

About ING

ING is a global financial institution of Dutch origin offering banking, investments, life insurance, and retirement services to over 85 million residential, corporate and institutional clients in more than 40 countries. With a diverse workforce of about 115,000 people, ING is dedicated to setting the standard in helping our clients manage their financial future.

In the U.S., the ING (NYSE: ING) family of companies offers a comprehensive array of financial services to retail and institutional clients, which includes life insurance, retirement plans, mutual funds, managed accounts, alternative investments, direct banking, institutional investment management, annuities, employee benefits, and financial planning. ING holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves nearly 30 million customers across the nation.

ING’s diversity management philosophy and commitment to workplace diversity, diversity marketing, corporate citizenship and supplier diversity fosters an inclusive environment for employees that supports a distinctive product and service experience for the financial services consumer. For more information, visit www.ing.com/us.

About the ING Foundation

The ING Foundation’s mission is to improve the quality of life in communities where ING operates and its employees and customers live. Through charitable giving and employee volunteerism, the foundation focuses on programs in the areas of financial literacy, children’s education, diversity, and environmental sustainability. For more information, visit www.ing-usafoundation.com.

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