



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

Competition Recognizes Community's Efforts to Reduce High School Dropout Rates

[October 12, 2011, Durham NC]— Durham achieved national recognition as one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People* presented by ING for its initiatives to help young people. The competition recognizes communities across the country that focus on reducing high school dropout rates and providing service and support to their youth.

A three-time 100 Best winner, Durham ensures its youth programs are inclusive of all groups represented in this diverse community. Working together with residents, schools, universities and local businesses, the East Durham Children's Initiative provides targeted resources and assistance for children and families within the 120-block radius of Durham's most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Durham makes academics a priority with its Strengthening Families Program that improves relationships between local parents and middle school youth, as well as its Word of the Day program that helps students prepare for the SAT. Word of the Day, a partnership between Durham Public Schools, the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce and Urban Planet Mobile, texts 11th grade students a word each day with an audio link to definitions.

Local high school students can also participate in the Junior Leadership Durham program, which helps them gain fundamental understanding of the politics and workings of Durham. Accurately dubbed the "City of Medicine," Durham keeps its young people healthy with the Partnership for a Healthy Durham, which develops community strategies to address barriers preventing young children from receiving preventive health care.

"In a nation where 7,000 students drop out of high school every day, we hope Durham's initiatives inspire other communities across the nation to take action to solve the challenges facing their young people," said Marguerite W. Kondracke, America's Promise Alliance president and CEO. "Durham is especially deserving of this recognition due to their efforts to ensure that their young people graduate high school and go on to lead healthy, productive lives. Durham refuses to let the challenges they face determine the future for their young people. Instead, they are helping their youth prosper and become contributing members of society."

At noon EST on Oct. 12, 2011, Kondracke will join America's Promise Alliance Chair Alma Powell and ING Foundation President Rhonda Mims at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., to officially announce the 100 winning communities in a live webcast www.americaspromise.org/100bestwebcast

"The issues surrounding youth education and success are of vital importance to ING," said Mims. "Our ongoing support for *100 Best* underscores our commitment to the cause and the value we place on recognizing communities that produce measurable results for youth."

Durham will receive a \$2,500 grant, signage identifying the community as one of the nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People*, and access to America's Promise Alliance's community development resources.

First held in 2005, the *100 Best* competition is one of the Alliance's signature initiatives and is part of its Grad Nation campaign, which is a 10-year initiative to mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. The *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.

All communities entering the *100 Best* competition completed a rigorous application where they provided details on how their existing programs and initiatives help deliver the Five Promises—resources identified by the Alliance as being critical to the development of healthy, successful children: caring adults; safe places; healthy start; effective education; and opportunities to help others. Applicants were also asked to describe how different sectors of their community work together to help children and families overcome challenges. Most importantly, communities were judged on the strength and innovation of their efforts and programs to help young people graduate from high school prepared for college and the 21st century workforce.

This year, more than 300 communities from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were nominated for the *100 Best* distinction. Winners were chosen by a distinguished panel of 20 judges that included: Marc Morial, president and CEO, National Urban League, Roxanne Spillett, president and CEO, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and Michelle Shearer, Chemistry Teacher, Urbana High School, 2011 National Teacher of the Year.

The winners are a diverse group, ranging from small communities to large cities. A list of all 2011 winners can be found 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 by raising awareness, supporting communities, and engaging in nonpartisan advocacy. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we harness the collective power of our partner network to mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. 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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