

NEWS



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Orange County Executive

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For Immediate Release

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**Orange County Named One of Nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People*
By America's Promise Alliance and ING for 2nd Year in a Row**
National Competition Recognizes Communities' Efforts to Reduce High School Dropout Rates

Orange County, NY – “I am exceptionally proud to announce that for the second year in a row, Orange County has earned a spot on the 100 Best Communities for Young People list,” said County Executive Edward A. Diana. “This national recognition by America’s Promise Alliance and ING is testament to the hard work and commitment our County has to doing what is right and necessary to help our young people achieve their potential,” added the County Executive. The annual competition recognizes communities across the country that focus on reducing high school dropout rates and providing service and support to their youth.

Orange County has been named one of the nation’s *100 Best Communities for Young People* for a second year because of the communities’ various leadership development and educational initiatives to support youth. The Summer Youth Leadership Academies provide more than 185 middle school youth in seven communities with opportunities to explore leadership styles, build skills, plan and implement service projects, and connect with peers. The program runs five days a week for four weeks in the summer to help middle school students in their upcoming transition to high school.

The Orange County Youth Bureau has provided the community with a centralized location for youth services since 1978, partnering with organizations such as Leadership Orange, United Way, and the Orange County Chamber of Commerce to develop new programs like Junior Leadership Orange, a program that allows the community to identify emerging youth leaders to participate in a seven month leadership development program which includes workshops that demonstrate how various sectors (private, public, faith, nonprofit) interact to form communities.

“We are proud of Orange County and our many partner agencies for being named one of the America’s Promise Alliance’s *100 Best*,” said County Executive Diana. “This award recognizes the hard work of many community members that have dedicated their time to making a difference in the lives of our young people.”

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“Being named to the *100 Best* list again is an accomplishment for which our entire community can be very proud,” said Carol Chichester, Director, Orange County Youth Bureau. “We know it takes a village to raise a child and as a County we have built many partnerships and encouraged significant collaboration between the organizations and agencies that serve our young people to ensure that they have the tools they need to find success as they become adults,” added Ms. Chichester. “These efforts on behalf of our youth are like a journey and the ongoing recognition affirms that we are on the right track, despite the economic challenges our community faces. I am extremely appreciative of the many people who have worked so hard to help us earn this distinction and thank them for their continued support.”

“In a nation where 7,000 students drop out of high school every day, we hope Orange County’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. “Orange County 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. Orange County 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 October 12, 2011, Kondracke joined 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. Orange County community partners and youth will come together to celebrate this achievement at the Graham Skea Recreation Area on December 8. The celebration event will include the Annual Youth Summit.

Orange County 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.

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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.

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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AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE 100 BEST COMMUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Q. What are the qualities of a *100 Best* community? Why is it important?

A: First awarded in 2005, being one of the *100 Best* means you are working together to keep kids in school and prepare them for the future.

- Faced with numerous challenges in society, our young people need us. The winning communities recognize this and have made improvements to ensure their young people have all the wrap-around supports necessary to be healthy, achieve academically, and succeed in life.

Q: What is Orange County doing that makes it one of the *100 Best* communities?

A: We have community leaders, educators, faith leaders, youth, families and neighbors working together to ensure our young people graduate and are ready for adulthood.

- We know that being named *100 Best* does not mean we're perfect, but it shows our collective commitment to Orange County youth, supporting them so they stay in school and providing the resources they need to succeed.

Q: How were the winners selected?

A: Applications were reviewed by a distinguished panel of civic, business, and nonprofit leaders. Winning communities had to demonstrate how they are collaborating across sectors (schools, nonprofits, business, and faith communities working together) to help the young people in cities and towns overcome challenges and achieve their potential.

Q: What do winning communities get for winning?

A: Winners received two road signs designating their community as one of the *100 Best*, support for a local celebration, and national publicity. Winners have an opportunity to become a part of the *100 Best* winners' network to share and learn from other successful programs.

Q: What does ING have to do with this initiative? What is their role in the competition?

A: ING Foundation shares a passion to invest in the development and future of America's young people. ING Foundation contributes \$3.5 million toward education initiatives, including *100 Best*.

Q. What are the benefits for the nation?

A: *100 Best* communities are helping to ensure this nation remains competitive in a global economy with a healthy, well-equipped workforce by developing confident, resilient youth ready to work.

- If the dropouts of the Class of 2008 had graduated, they would generate \$319 billion in wages over their working lives. The nation would have saved \$174 billion in health care costs.
- We will be closer to achieving President Obama's goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020.
- When a city or town comes together and provides the *Five Promises*, young people:
 - lead more productive, happier, and healthier lives
 - do better in school and are more likely to pursue higher education
 - less likely to fall victim to the negative influences around them
 - are five to 10 times MORE likely to become productive citizens in their communities.



SPOTLIGHT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES IN ORANGE COUNTY

CARING ADULTS

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County

Provides professionally supported one-to-one mentoring relationships in school and community-based settings. For more information, call 562-5900 or visit www.mentorachild.org.

Lucky U

Community-based initiative connecting young people with caring community members. New York's first Promise Place. For more information, call 469-4769 or visit www.luckyucorp.com.

Orange County System of Care

Youth, families, and agencies supporting youth with social, emotional, behavioral challenges and their families. For more information, call 360-6710 or visit www.mysystemofcare.com.

Volunteer Fire and EMS

Opportunities for young adults and adults to serve their local communities. Visit your local Volunteer Fire and EMS organizations for further information.

SAFE PLACES

Orange County Solutions Initiative

Provides additional youth programming during summer evenings and weekends to reduce juvenile offenses. For more information, visit www.orangecountygov.com/youthbureau.

Orange County Parks and Recreation

Extensive network of maintained and monitored facilities to ensure opportunities for constructive, healthy use of leisure time. For more information, visit www.orangecountynyparks.com.

Orange County Child Care Council and Orange County United Way

Ensures affordable access to quality child care during the day when caregivers need to work to support their families. For more information visit www.childcarecounciloc.org.

Town of Walkill Police Youth Coalition

Youth, community members, and law enforcement work together to provide pro-social activities and positive community relations, discouraging delinquent behaviors.

HEALTHY START

Orange County Departments of Social Services and Health

Increasing access to health care, regular health checkups and treatment, good nutrition and exercise, and health education in both English and Spanish. Visit www.orangecountygov.com.

Community Health Centers

Providing vital, comprehensive primary care to individuals and families with limited financial resources. Visit www.nachc.com to search for local community health centers.

EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

Truancy and Drop Out Prevention Task Force

School and community-based professionals sharing best practices and strategies for reducing truancy and drop out. For more information, visit www.ouboces.org.

Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS)

A proactive systems approach to establishing behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students to succeed in the school setting. For more information, visit www.pbis.org.

Safe School Ambassadors (SSA)

Student-centered, research-based, anti-bullying and violence prevention program. For more information, visit www.safeschoolambassadors.org.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART)

Cognitive behavioral intervention focused on adolescents, training them to cope with aggressive and violent behaviors. For more information, visit www.uscart.org.

Check and Connect

Mentors keep education a salient issue for disengaged students, their teachers, and family members. For more information, visit www.checkandconnect.org.

School Resource Officers and D.A.R.E

Certified law enforcement officers who engage with students in the school setting to educate and develop positive youth/law enforcement relationships. Visit www.nasro.org and www.dare.com.

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP OTHERS

Keystone Club

Chartered leadership and service club for ages 14-18. Focus on club and community, leadership, education, careers, unity, free enterprise, and recreation. Visit www.bgca.org.

Torch Club

Chartered leadership and service club for ages 11-13. Focus on club and community, leadership, education, and recreation. Visit www.bgca.org.

Summer Youth Leadership Academy

Four week intensive leadership academy for middle school-aged youth. Began in 2007 in Port Jervis and has expanded into 8 municipalities. Visit www.orangecountygov.com/youthbureau.

Middletown Mayor's Youth Council

Middletown youth working together to enrich quality of life for youngsters in Middletown through service. Visit www.middletown-ny.com.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Partners for Children, Youth and Families Initiative

Conceived in 1998, this consortium of coalitions works together to plan and deliver services, opportunities, and supports in Orange County. Visit www.orangecountygov.com/pfc.

PINS Diversion

Public and nonprofit service providers partner to provide services and supports to youth at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. Visit www.orangecountygov.com/youthbureau.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Services (RHYA)

A network of providers, including HONORehg, providing services to vulnerable children and youth without shelter. For more information, visit www.emergencyhousinggroup.org.