

McKinney Named One of the 100 Best Communities for Young People

Annual Competition Recognizes Communities that Prioritize Youth Education and Well-Being

McKINNEY, TEXAS (Sept. 12, 2012) – McKinney today was named one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People presented by ING*. The national award was given to McKinney to recognize its outstanding and innovative work in addressing the high school dropout crisis and for its programs and services that make it an outstanding place for youth to live, learn and grow.

McKinney will receive a \$2,500 grant and signage identifying the community as one of the nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People*. The city and the McKinney Independent School District (MISD) worked together to nominate McKinney for the honor by completing a rigorous application. Cities that receive the designation must prove that programs and initiatives help deliver the Five Promises—resources identified by America's Promise as being critical to the development of healthy, successful children: caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; effective education; and opportunities to help others. MISD Superintendent J.D. Kennedy attended the ceremony to receive the award.

“Being named one of America's Promise Alliance's 100 Best is significant and meaningful to the entire community. We are proud to add this to a growing list of national accolades our city has been honored with recently, including being named the No. 2 Best Place to Live in America by Money Magazine,” said Mayor Brian Loughmiller. “So many dedicated people and programs contributed to this designation, and it further reinforces our belief that a focus on youth is vital to the entire community.”

McKinney, a first-time *100 Best* winner, was honored for community involvement on behalf of young people in the area. For example, [Partners in Education](#) is a collaborative program among the business community, nonprofit organizations and the local government. As part of a community effort to help students become self-sustaining adults, Partners in Education created [REACH](#), a campus-based mentoring program which helps foster self-esteem and educational motivation. The program has connected more than 700 mentors with 800 young people since its creation in 2006.

McKinney also ensures its young people have access to quality health programs and information about healthier lifestyles. The [Children and Community Health Center of McKinney](#) is a free clinic that has immunized more than 83 percent of local 2-year-olds, well above the state average. Last Spring, the city and MISD sponsored Get Fit McKinney, a free community event that included activities, games, and health and wellness demonstrations for youth and their families.

“As young people across the country go back to school, it is especially timely to recognize communities like McKinney that have come together to make supporting young people a top priority and that are committed to helping young Americans reach their full potential,” said [John Gomperts](#), America's Promise Alliance president and

CEO. “The *100 Best* winners are doing outstanding work delivering the Five Promises that create the conditions for all young people to have the best chance for success. We hope the example set by these communities provides inspiration for others to take action.”

At noon EST on Sept. 12, Gomperts 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 during a live [webcast](#).

“The increase we have seen in graduation rates over the past few years is due, in large part, to the hard work communities such as McKinney have done to make sure their youth have access to an outstanding education and support services,” said Rhonda Mims, president of the ING Foundation and head of the ING U.S. Office of Corporate Responsibility. “It is also important for ING to partner with organizations such as America’s Promise Alliance so we can share these best practices and play a role in improving student achievement and the nation’s economy.”

The *100 Best* competition is part of the Grad Nation campaign, a large and growing movement of dedicated individuals, organizations and communities working together to end the dropout crisis. The goal of Grad Nation is to raise the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020, with no school graduating fewer than 80 percent of its students on time.

In its sixth year, the competition experienced its greatest interest to date with nominations from more than 320 communities representing all 50 states, Washington, D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Winners were chosen by a distinguished panel of judges that included 2012 National Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki, 2012 National Superintendent of the Year Heath Morrison, National Urban League President Marc Morial, and GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard.

Two youth representatives also were named as selection panelists. These include Austin Bargmann, 15, from Brighton, Colo., a two-time *100 Best* winner, and Ashley Levanduski, 17, from Paso Robles, Calif., who serves as a volunteer coach with an America's Promise partner organization, The First Tee, an international youth organization that introduces golf and its inherent values to young people.