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Missoula Named One of Nation's *100 Best Communities* for Young People for Fourth Time

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

Missoula has been named a winner of the America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People* competition presented by ING. Its 2010 recognition marks the fourth win for Missoula in the competition.

Missoula was named one of the nation's *100 Best* because of its community-wide effort to help youth become healthy, caring, and independent adults. The city places importance on education and has programs in place to increase the graduation rate. One such program, Graduation Matters Missoula, guided by the schools and the community, aims to achieve a perfect graduation rate and promote academic re-entry for current dropouts. A number of after-school programs in Missoula regularly bring community providers to schools to provide safe youth activities. Last year, nearly 2,500 students participated in more than 85 different programming events.

Community organizations, in celebration of Missoula's award, will join parents in finding ways to better access services, become more knowledgeable about them and to create new services to ensure Missoula's youth will lead healthy productive lives. The celebration will take place Tuesday, October 19, from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the Home Arts Building at the Fairgrounds. The celebration is free to the general public and includes dinner.

Missoula has worked hard to better promote social services for young people. The public directory of services includes a database, website, and weekly emails featuring youth programming to meet the needs of at-risk youth. Three years ago, voters passed a mill levy to financially support youth substance abuse prevention programming; a Youth Council was inaugurated to ensure youth have a voice in the community; and organizations throughout the community work together to achieve the five Promises identified by America's Promise that will help youth become happy and successful adults. These promises are caring adults; safe places; healthy starts; effective education; and opportunities to help others. Dozens of organizations and programs contributed to the Forum's application for the award.

Responding to the news of the award, Missoula County Commissioner Jean Curtiss said, “I am proud of Missoula for receiving this award for the fourth year in a row. It’s a testament to the incredible community and the wonderful services we provide our youth.”

“Great communities for children are great communities for everyone,” said Missoula Mayor John Engen. “They offer safe places to learn, play, exercise, work, live and love. Being named one of America’s 100 Best Communities for Young People again translates into Missoula *being* one of America’s 100 best communities.”

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

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

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