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9-27-2010

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Recommended Citation

City of Manchester, Office of the Mayor, "Manchester names among 100 best communities for young people" (2010). *Manchester Research Group*. 43.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/mrg/43>

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CITY OF MANCHESTER

Office of the Mayor



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: September 27, 2010

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Manchester Named Among 100 Best Communities for Young People *America's Promise Alliance and ING Recognize Manchester for Taking Action to Help Reduce Local Dropout Rates and Create Brighter Futures for City Youth*

MANCHESTER, NH – In an announcement made by America's Promise Alliance the efforts of the City of Manchester's civic and community leaders were honored by being named as a winner of the *100 Best Communities for Young People (100 Best)* competition presented by ING. The America's Promise Alliance (the Alliance) is the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to youth and children. This 2010 recognition marks the second time the City of Manchester has been awarded this prestigious recognition.

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. Mayor Gatsas began, "On behalf of the City of Manchester I am truly honored to have received this recognition. This is a true testament to the hard work and dedication of the Office of Youth Services, our teachers and administrators and the elected officials that have always made city youth a top priority."

Manchester was selected as one of the nation's *100 Best* because of its commitment to meet the educational needs and the overall well-being of its young people. Through collaborative efforts of the Mayor's Office, the Board of Aldermen and the School Board the city has increased funding for schools and made an investment in text books and in-class technology.

The city was also named as a *100 Best* because of the emphasis the City of Manchester places on youth-focused programs supported by the *Makin' It Happen Coalition*. The *Makin' it Happen Coalition* coordinates residents and youth resources to promote a drug-free community and educational success; young people are encouraged and provided community opportunities throughout Manchester as an alternative and constructive use of their free time. Another program recognized by the America's Promise Alliance was *The Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MYAC)* which provides young people an opportunity to work directly with local government officials to shape public policy. *MYAC* provides a voice to young people to influence community development and violence prevention programs.

Marty Boldin, Director of Youth Services added, "As we come up on 40 years of service as a department in the City of Manchester it's clear that we are making a difference. We are increasing programs and enrollment and as a result we are seeing more kids stay in school and most importantly carve out paths for successful lives as adults."

On September 21, 2010, Manchester 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, Manchester 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. "Through its innovative and far-reaching programs, Manchester 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. "Manchester 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."

(more)

The 100 Best Communities for Young People 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 honorees and their accomplishments can be found at www.americaspromise.org/100Best.

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 Manchester 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."

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Attachment: About 100 Best & Facts