



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Wicomico County/Salisbury Named One of the Nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People* By America's Promise Alliance and ING**

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



Mayor Ireton and Executive Pollitt at "100 Best" Celebration at East Salisbury School  
More photos of celebration are on <http://www.wicomicocounty.org/>

**Wicomico County/Salisbury, Md.**—The efforts of Wicomico County/Salisbury civic and community leaders were honored today when America's Promise Alliance (the Alliance), the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to youth and children, announced the city had been named a winner of the Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People (100 Best)* competition presented by ING, a global financial services company and leading provider of retirement plans and programs for teachers. Its 2010 recognition marks the fourth win for Wicomico County/Salisbury in the competition.

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 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The 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 *100 Best Communities for Young People* and their accomplishments can be found at [www.americaspromise.org/100Best](http://www.americaspromise.org/100Best).

“Through its innovative and far-reaching programs, Wicomico County/Salisbury 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. “Wicomico County/Salisbury 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.”

Wicomico County was named one of the nation’s *100 Best* for its public and private partnerships to prepare its young people for success. Each year the Wicomico Partnership for Families and Children, composed of 25 members from business and child service organizations, provide more than 1,000 youth leadership and development activities and services for young people up to age 24. Other programs such as Salisbury’s Promise: Alliance for Youth initiates partnerships between schools and faith-based groups to recruit mentors, develop leadership training academies, and offer afterschool tutoring to encourage academic success.

Wicomico County continues to make progress towards increasing its graduation rate. The Wicomico County Mentoring Project places caring adults in schools to support teachers and further motivate youth to achieve. Schools participating in the program have seen an increase in student attendance and fewer behavioral concerns. Other programs, such as Kids of Honor, have encouraged participants to excel academically. In fact, 100 percent of participants in Kids of Honor graduate on time or ahead of their peers.

Upon being informed of the “100 Best” designation, Wicomico County Executive Richard M. Pollitt, Jr., said, “I am absolutely delighted to join Mayor Ireton in celebrating our 4<sup>th</sup> selection in 5 years as one of America’s ‘100 Best Communities for Young People.’ I salute Dr. George Whitehead and all of our dedicated citizens who have worked so hard to make Wicomico County and Salisbury a place of hope and promise for our most valuable asset, our young people. While it is wonderful to receive awards and recognition, the best thing about this is that our community is, as Ms. Kondracke stated, consistently giving our youth the essential resources they need to succeed in life.”

Salisbury Mayor James Ireton said, “This is great news! Our 100 Best Communities for Young People award is possible due to our greatest asset: our citizens. On the heels of Salisbury’s All-America City award, national experts know that this community is moving forward, facing challenges, and continuing the investment in our young people. Congratulations, Wicomico County!”

On September 21, 2010, Wicomico County/Salisbury 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, Wicomico County/Salisbury 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.

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 Wicomico County/Salisbury 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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."

#### **About *100 Best***

First held in 2005, *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. This year, more than 350 communities in 50 states registered online for the *100 Best* distinction at [www.americaspromise.org/100best](http://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. 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.ing-usafoundation.com).

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