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Release from the Medina City Schools

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Medina Wins National Award - 100 Best Communities for Young People

Today, Medina was named as one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People* an award presented by ING. The national award was given to the Medina community 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.

Medina, a first-time *100 Best* winner, has a number of programs in place to ensure its youth grow up healthy and prepared for life after graduation. The community offers in-school nutrition and physical activity classes, and uses the Fuel Up to Play 60 grant, a national program that increases students' awareness of and access to healthy food and physical activity with a goal of 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Medina also encourages its youth to bike to school to promote physical activity and a cleaner environment.

In addition to health initiatives, Medina helps students strengthen their academic skills during the summer, specifically in math and reading, with the Summer Reinforcement Program, a United Way of Medina County agency. The program provides tutors to students in a classroom-like setting as well as speech therapy and a book mobile. To ensure that all the needs of area youth are met, Living Well Medina County seeks to find gaps in youth services and works to improve the community's economic, health and educational components.

"Being named one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best* is significant and meaningful to the entire community," said Medina City Schools Superintendent Dr. Randy Stepp. "So many dedicated people and programs contributed to this win and it further reinforces our belief that a focus on youth pays dividends to the entire community."

"As young people across the country go back to school, it is especially timely to recognize communities like Medina 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."

“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 Medina 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.”

Medina 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.

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 high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020, with no school graduating fewer than 80 percent of its students on time.

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 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. Applicants also were 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.

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, Colorado, a two-time *100 Best* winner, and Ashley Levanduski, 17 from Paso Robles, California, who serves as a volunteer coach with an America’s Promise partner organization.

A list of all 2012 winners can be found at AmericasPromise.org/100Best.