



CONTACT:
Tammy Gabel, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Windsor Unified School District
(707) 837-7700
tgabel@wusd.org

**Windsor Named One of the
100 Best Communities for Young People
by America's Promise Alliance and ING U.S.**

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

[September 12, 2012, Windsor CA]—The Windsor Community, along with The Windsor Unified School District was named today as one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People presented by ING*. The national award was given to recognize how the school district and community work together to provide outstanding and innovative programs and services that make it one of the best communities in the nation for youth to live, learn, grow and graduate.

The Windsor Unified School District and Community was honored for giving young people a voice in community development and because the community works extensively with the schools to provide youth with multiple opportunities for educational and personal growth. Windsor is recognized as a cohesive community that is a good place for youth to grow-up. Two contributors to the sense of community are Town Green events that invite the community to come out together and the school district's grade level configuration and model two-way bilingual immersion program, which promote learning together as one community.

The community's strengths include extensive community involvement and mentoring of youth. For example, the Windsor Chamber of Commerce sponsors the [Junior Chamber](#) which funds Windsor Brandz, an initiative that gives young people real world business experience where they develop and implement a marketing plan to promote a local business. The Windsor Brandz initiative also gave six \$500 student scholarships in 2011. Members of the Rotary Club of Windsor speak to 9th grade students each year about the importance of staying in school through the Choices Program and provide a monthly mentor program.

Community service is integral to the Windsor USD student experience. Windsor elementary students learn about the value of helping others by participating in community service projects and club activities through the Kiwanis Club's [K Kids](#). The Town's [Youth Action Team](#), a community service group of children from grades 6-8, help disabled senior citizens by participating in group recreational activities. With guidance from a large community advisory board, high school students work closely with community mentors to complete and present a significant senior project.

To encourage more young people to pursue a college education, the school district's award winning [AVID](#) (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program supports students in grades 7-12 in preparing for secondary education by teaching them how to select a college, write college essays and complete financial aid applications. The Continuation School was recognized as a state model in 2011/12 for its educational effectiveness and high school graduation rate.

Windsor also has a strong Boys and Girls Club program with many community volunteers, such as Master Gardeners, and financial contributors. The Best Communities have places like the Boys and Girls Club and Parks and Recreation Programs where students can grow and learn.

"Being named one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best* is significant and meaningful to the entire community," said Windsor Unified School District's Superintendent, Tammy Gabel "This is an award that recognizes many dedicated people and programs in our community 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 Windsor that have come together to make supporting young people a top priority and 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 Windsor 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."

Windsor Unified School District 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 national 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 Mieliwoki, 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.

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

About America’s Promise Alliance

America’s Promise Alliance is the nation’s largest partnership dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. We bring together more than 400 national organizations representing nonprofit groups, businesses, communities, educators and policymakers. Through our Grad Nation campaign, we mobilize Americans to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, America’s Promise believes the success of young people is grounded in the Five Promises—Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. For more information, visit AmericasPromise.org.

About ING U.S.

ING U.S. constitutes the U.S.-based retirement, investment management and insurance operations of Dutch-based ING Groep N.V. (NYSE: ING). In the U.S., the 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, institutional investment management, annuities, employee benefits and financial planning. ING U.S. holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves approximately 13 million customers across the nation. For more information, visit <http://ing.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 education, children’s education and physical education. For more information, visit <http://www.ing-usafoundation.com> or connect with us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/act2impact>) and Twitter ([@INGact2impact](https://twitter.com/INGact2impact)).

#