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PUBLIC INFORMATION

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**CHARLESTON 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

Charleston, SC – The City of Charleston has been named one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People* presented by ING. The national award was given to Charleston to recognize its continued work to address the high school dropout crisis and for its programs and services that make it an outstanding place for youth to live, learn and grow.

A four-time *100 Best* winner, Charleston offers a variety of civic engagement programs and child support services that demonstrate its commitment to youth. Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. provided the leadership in the development of the [Charleston Area Youth Master Plan](#) that outlines specific actions to address the needs of young people, including dropout prevention, safe recreational activities, health and wellness, and effective youth development policy. Mayor Riley also convened the first Mayor's Youth Commission in 1999 to provide a mechanism for youth to have their voice heard. More recently, the city has established Charleston Youth Serve, which encourages community service among Charleston's youth. The Charleston community also benefits greatly from a number of agencies and organizations focused on serving youth, including Communities in Schools, which provides direct service to students to help them overcome the challenges they face and graduate from high school.

"Being named one of America's Promise Alliance's *100 Best* for the fourth time is significant and meaningful to the entire community," said Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. "So many dedicated people and programs contributed to this win and it further reinforces our belief that a focus on youth has a positive effect on the entire community."

Charleston will receive a \$2,500 grant which will be used to launch the Youth Philanthropy Grant project. This will be a youth-driven initiative that will enable youth to apply for mini-grants for community service projects that address one of the five Promises of America's Promise: caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; effective education; and opportunities to help others.

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 Mielowocki, 2012 National Superintendent of the Year Heath Morrison, National Urban League President Marc Morial, and GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard.

“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 Charleston 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.

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).

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