

# ABOUTGREATERCINNATI.COM

*Inform ... Inspire ... Impact*

Volume 5, Article 5

February 2012

## CINCINNATI AND NORWOOD COMMUNITIES AMONG THE 100 BEST!

BY BRENDA C. MCCASKILL (BRENDA@ABOUTGREATERCINNATI.COM)

PHOTO/GRAPHIC PROVIDED

America's Promise Alliance has named two Southwest Ohio communities to its list of **100 Best Communities for Young People!**

What's that all about?

America's Promise Alliance, founded in 1997 with General Colin Powell as Chairman and chaired today by Alma Powell, is a cross-sector partnership of 400+ corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups passionate about "improving lives and changing outcomes for children". A top priority of America's Promise Alliance is to ensure that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, work and life.

The **100 Best Communities for Young People presented by ING** is an America's Promise Alliance competition which showcases communities that "create programs and services to address the high school dropout crisis and provide support to their young people". In recognition of the innovative and effective work being done in their communities to ensure a bright future for young people, both Cincinnati (OH) and Norwood (OH) were named to the 2011 list. This is the second time both communities have been nationally recognized for this achievement!

"We are truly honored." Deb Robi-



Thanks to the collaborative efforts of organizations in both communities, Cincinnati and Norwood were named to the **100 Best Communities for Young People 2011**. Pictured above with Mrs. Alma Powell, Board of Directors Chair of America's Promise Alliance, are members of the Norwood Community Coalition who were in Washington, D.C., in October 2011 when the **100 Best** were announced. Pictured left- right: Laura Ferguson, Vicki Gabbard, Mrs. Alama Powell, Glenna Edwards, and Deb Robison.

son, Family and Children First Coordinator for Norwood Schools and Chairperson of the Norwood Community Coalition (NCC), a collaborating group on the **100 Best** Norwood submission, tells AboutGreaterCincinnati.com.

"This is a big deal. One of 100 Best in the nation!"

Since 2005, the **100 Best** has recognized communities that make children and youth a priority. Winners are recognized for enhancing local educational opportunities, in addition to most winning communities help facilitate greater access to quality health care for young

people, encourage youth civic engagement and supply developmental resources that create better places for young people to live, learn, and grow. Submissions were judged by a distinguished panel on various criteria including how communities are best exemplifying the America's Promise Alliance five promises: Caring Adults, Safe Places, Healthy Starts, Effective Education and Opportunities for Service.

"These 100 outstanding communities refuse to let the economic and other challenges they face determine the fate of their youth." said Marguerite W. Kondracke, America's Prom-

Continued on Page 2

Got a story idea or comment about this story? Send an email to [editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com](mailto:editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com).

## CINCINNATI AND NORWOOD COMMUNITIES AMONG THE 100 BEST! (CONT'D)

ise Alliance President and CEO.

“Instead, they are working together to ensure that all their young people can reach their full potential.”

In Cincinnati and Norwood, area community organizations collaborated to submit for the **100 Best**. In the end, Cincinnati and Norwood were two of three Ohio communities (Hudson, OH is the third) selected from more than 300 communities from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, for the 2011 list. Winners were announced in October 2011. Each of the winning communities received a \$2,500 grant.

“The win recognizes the hard work of organizations on the ground and out in our community committed to improving the lives of young people.” said Ben Greenberg, Strive Partnership Fellow and coordinator of the Cincinnati 100 Best Committee. “The award is a testament to their passion for young people.”

So, what makes Cincinnati and Norwood among the **100 Best**?

- ◆ For the second time, America’s Promise Alliance has named Cincinnati one of its **100 Best Communities for Young People**. To ensure the safety of young students, local residents along with the Board of Education, the Department of Transportation and the Cincinnati Police Department instituted the Safe Routes to School Initiative. The city’s Strive Partnership serves as a national model

of aligning resources to raise graduation rates and support at-risk youth. To support youth that dropped out of school without earning a diploma or GED, the Connect2Success program provides young people with access to a supportive school environment and additional support systems needed to complete secondary education credentials and achieve gainful employment.



- ◆ Norwood, a two-time **100 Best** winner, developed initiatives to reduce the dropout rate, support youth activism and offer a range of educational programs. Over the past decade, the community has increased its graduation rate by 13% and has focused students on post-graduate goals by filling the high school walls with college banners, photos of alumni who went to college and posters about post-secondary studies and careers. Norwood schools are also committed to offering a range of services to students of all ages. Local schools are using a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Grant to expand

services, including 70 different clubs, to elementary, middle, and high school students.

What’s next for the area winners?

In January 2012, the Cincinnati **100 Best** award celebration served as the kickoff of a series of community engagement events. Funded by the **100 Best** grant award, the events will create and sustain a community-wide dialogue and movement highlighting efforts within the Cincinnati community providing young people the variety of “excellent educational and personal development options necessary to enable them to make personally relevant choices which result in opportunities for individual success in career and life”. A commissioned work of public art - a giant inflatable sculpture entitled “Up” - will be a part of the conversations along the way.

Also in January 2012, the Norwood **100 Best** award celebration drew 200 people together to celebrate their achievement. In addition to making the five promises a part of everyday life within the NCC, some of the winning grant funds will be allocated for a youth scholarship to be given to a student who characterizes the five promises of the **100 Best** competition.

The great efforts in both communities continues. “Being named one of the best doesn’t mean we are perfect,” said Deb Robison “but it means we are extraordinarily committed to seeing positive changes happen for our young people.”

*Related Links:* [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)

*Got a story idea or comment about this story? Send an email to [editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com](mailto:editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com).*