

Youth Count Column: October 2012: “Floyd County: one of 100 Best Communities for Young People”

On September 12, 2012, America’s Promise Alliance, a national partnership focused on ending the high school dropout crisis, recognized Floyd County as one its 100 Best Communities for Young People in 2012.

What an honor! It means as a community we work together for the success of our youth. It does not mean that we do everything right, but it does mean that first we try and then we try even harder to provide a solid foundation for youth by building the following Five Promises:

1. **Caring Adults:** Every child needs support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools, and communities. From Youth Count educating the community about the need for each of us engaging in positive youth development, to Youth for Christ, to YMCA program directors and coaches, to churches, and more, community entities demonstrate caring.
2. **Safe Places:** Every child needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and on the Internet. This happens because of afterschool program like Cool Club or 21st Century Learning Centers, SAFE PLACE sites, counseling services such as Brandon’s House, or simply neighbors watching out for kids.
3. **Effective Education:** America’s Promise believe it is critical that all young people 1) receive an effective education; 2) graduate from high school on time; and 3) graduate ready to pursue post-secondary education. New Albany Floyd County School student scores on various educational benchmarks continue to improve. Choices in education ranging from traditional public schools, to Community Montessori, to regional charter schools like Rock Creek Community Academy, to home-schooling help ensure that different learning styles and needs are met.
4. **Healthy Start:** All children need healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthful habits. Blessings in a Backpack, Rauch’s Healthy Families program, to numerous food pantries and free hot meals daily, to health fairs, churches and other organizations help ensure a healthy start for our kids.
5. **Opportunities to Help Others:** All children and youth need and deserve the chance to make a difference - in their families, schools, communities, nation and world. Community service requirements in schools, Youth Philanthropy Councils, Miles for Merry Miracles, mission work through churches, along with family and individual efforts offer our young people opportunities to serve and to lead and set the stage for continuing that work in adulthood.

Additional factors play a crucial role in Floyd County. Our community abounds with collaborative efforts in in which working together to address issues and provide resources overrides the desire to have individual ownership. Nearly 70 organizations connect through Youth Count. Dozens of organizations work through both Floyd County Step Ahead and Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Task Force. We all realize that funding is a necessity for bringing most efforts to fruition. From scholarships, to funding of programs and initiatives, the City of New Albany, Floyd County Government, Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County, Blue Sky Foundation and other generous funders provide the backbone of financial resources.

We should applaud our efforts which led to the 100 Best recognition and we should challenge ourselves, individually and collectively, and whether personally or professionally, to ensure that as we go forward we look at our actions and decisions through the lens of “what is best for our youth”. Our youth are our best resources!

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