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Help make Sarasota County one of the 'Best Communities for Youth'

Join the campaign to have Sarasota County recognized as one of the "100 Best Communities for Youth." The award is presented by the America's Promise Alliance.

Sarasota County's application for the award will recognize the unique partnerships and programs that have supported thousands of youth in Sarasota County. The award recognizes communities that use collaboration and innovation to improve conditions for youth.

"We want to make sure we haven't missed any great stories or ideas that would support our application," said County Commissioner Shannon Staub, who is serving on the application development team. "There is so much good happening here."

The public can participate in the application, which is due June 1, by going to the Web site www.sarasotacountycares4youth.org and by responding to the question, "What makes Sarasota County a great place for youth?"

The site will be maintained after the application is submitted to share information on youth, and serve as a gathering place for those interested in learning more.

The alliance was founded in 1997 by Gen. Colin Powell and is a partnership of more than 300 corporations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and advocacy groups that work to improve lives and change outcomes for children.

"It's exciting to see what people in our community think," said Kari Ellingstad, Executive Director of CHIP. "The website allows you to learn how the community supports young people, and we hope it will spark new dialogue on issues."

"As people who work with youth, we know that Sarasota County is very supportive of youth," said Karen Bogues, Executive Director of Community Youth Development. "We want to understand how the community views the resources available for youth."

Organizers plan to use the information to understand more about the strengths and opportunities for serving youth in the future.

Community organizations participating in this campaign include Sarasota County Government, Sarasota County Health Department, CHIP, Early Learning Coalition, Sarasota County School District, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, Community Youth Development, Girls

Incorporated, Girl Scouts of Gulf Coast FL, Gulfcoast AHEC, Jewish Family & Children's Services, Laurel Civic Association, Planned Parenthood, Sarasota Family YMCA, SCOPE, South County Family YMCA, Teen Court, the Warehouse.

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