

Metro Omaha Tobacco Action Coalition



Volume 2, Issue 2, December 2010

Raise Tax, Saves Lives

Nationwide, the average state tobacco tax is \$1.45 per pack giving Nebraska a ranking of only 38th in the nation. Right now, 29 states have cigarette tax rates of at least \$1 or higher and 14 states have rates over \$2 per pack. Nebraska last increased its cigarette tax in 2002 and since that time 47 other states have increased their cigarette tax more than 100 times.

Tobacco use is still the leading cause of preventable death in Nebraska claiming 2,200 lives each year. The impact of tobacco is not just limited to adults. Approximately 36,000 Nebraska children alive today will die from their tobacco use. This is simply

unacceptable and more needs to be done now. For every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces youth smoking by 7% and overall cigarette consumption by about 4%.

As if taking the lives of Nebraskans was not enough, the cost of tobacco is being passed on to everyone in our state. Tobacco use costs Nebraska \$537 million every year in health care bills including \$134 million in annual Medicaid expenses.

With the toll it is taking on lives and our state's budget, MOTAC will be educating it's grassroots supporters about the benefits of raising the tobacco tax.

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Tobacco Compliance Checks

Metro Omaha Tobacco Action Coalition, PRIDE– Omaha, Inc. and local law enforcement, have completed the third round of tobacco compliance checks in 2010. Cooperating minors assist with the checks, use their own identification, and make no attempt to look over the legal purchase age. Visit www.motac.org for a list of retailers who failed this and previous quarter compliance checks.

Results:

October- December 2010 – Of 407 retail businesses checked, 23 locations sold tobacco to minors. This failure rate of 5.6% is up from the previous quarter's 5.0%.

Hoops for Life

On November 6, the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition held an event “Hoops for Life” which was a 3 on 3 Basketball tournament at University of Nebraska at Omaha Campus offering mental health screening and supportive resources to native youth in regards to suicide prevention.

MOTAC had a booth specific to Native American youth with tobacco prevention information and provided t-shirts for the participants.



Business Recognitions

The Metro Omaha Tobacco Action Coalition (MOTAC) presented certificates of appreciation to members of **C&A Industries**, **ConAgra Foods** and **Two Men And A Truck** for implementing smoke-free campus policies that go above and beyond the current smoke-free air laws.

MOTAC recognizes businesses and property owners who implement exemplary smoke-free or tobacco-free policies. Tobacco-free policies are a growing trend as community leaders realize the importance of such policies.



C&A Industries
September 16, 2010



ConAgra Foods
October 12, 2010



Two Men And A Truck
December 1, 2010

American Public Health Association

In November, the evaluation team from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), represented by Dr. Mary Cramer and Beth Stevens, traveled to Denver, Colorado to attend the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Conference. With more than 12,000 attendees, APHA is the largest annual gathering of public health professionals in the country.

UNMC gave a presentation as part of a panel discussion on smoke-free homes, which was attended by more than 75 people. The UNMC presentation, entitled "Smoke-free policies for multi-unit housing: A descriptive comparison of the perceptions and experiences of landlords and tenants," reported the findings from two studies carried out by the evaluation team: the 2008 Landlords Survey and the 2010

Tenants Survey conducted in Douglas County.

Despite the adverse health effects of second-hand smoke, the majority of multi-unit housing landlords allow some degree of smoking in their properties. The UNMC presentation highlighted the inconsistencies between the perceptions of landlords who don't have smoke-free policies and the lived experiences of those who do have policies.

For example, nearly half of landlords with no smoke-free policy (42.5%) believed that their vacancy rates would increase if they implemented a smoke-free policy for their property. However, the vast majority of landlords with a smoke-free policy (93.5%) did not report an actual increase in vacancy rates. In addition, nearly half of landlords with smoke-free policies (48.4%) said that

their maintenance costs had decreased. Besides comparing landlords with and without smoke-free policies, the presentation also pointed out areas where tenants' experiences and preferences for smoke-free policies differed from those of landlords. For instance, while landlords believe that cost is a top priority for tenants when choosing a rental unit, nearly one-third of tenants who lived in smoky buildings (31%) said that they would pay up to \$50 per month more to live in a completely smoke-free building.

The presentation concluded with theme recommendations for landlords and tenants, including the economic case for smoke-free policies, market demand, policy enforcement, and tenant empowerment.



Top: Dr. Mary Cramer (second from left), and other presenters

Right: The opening session of APHA



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**Fighting Tobacco Through
Community Action!**

Partners/Members:

- Alegent Health System
- American Cancer Society
- American Lung Association
- Christ Cathedral
- Creighton Cardiac Center
- Douglas County Health Department
- Douglas County Housing
- Girl Scouts Spirit Nebraska
- Gray Group, Inc.
- Group to Alleviate Smoking Pollution of Nebraska (GASP-NE)
- Hidden Hills Health & Rehab
- Iowa Western Community College
- LiveWise Coalition
- New Creations, Inc.
- No Limits
- Omaha Police Department
- Omaha Public Schools
- Pfizer
- PRIDE-Omaha, Inc.
- Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare
- Setting the Captives Free
- Tobacco Free Cass County (TFCC)
- Tobacco Free Nebraska
- Tobacco Free Sarpy (TFS)
- University of Nebraska Medical Center - College of Nursing
- University of Nebraska Medical Center - Center for Reducing Health Disparities
- University of Nebraska Medical Center -Evaluation
- ...and many individuals.

The **Metro Omaha Tobacco Action Coalition (MOTAC)** is a dynamic coalition comprised of over 50 health related individuals, organizations, and educational groups. MOTAC was formed in 1992 in order to strengthen tobacco control and prevention efforts in the metro Omaha area. Since its inception, MOTAC has taken the lead within Douglas County to address tobacco related issues through public education and community action.

Mission: To prevent and reduce tobacco use and the accompanying health and economic consequences in the Omaha area via prevention through public policy and education.

Goals: Reduce tobacco use, reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, and increase capacity from diverse groups.

MOTAC Officers: **Vickie Young, President** **Paul Carter, Vice President**
 Tamicka Bradley, Treasurer **Christine Stewart, Secretary**

MOTAC meets the first Tuesday of each month at 10:00 am at the American Cancer Society, 9850 Nicholas Street in Omaha.