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What's Happening: Smoke-free honors
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The Metro Omaha Tobacco Action Coalition held its annual recognition luncheon Friday, in honor of people and businesses for their commitment to tobacco prevention and control.

"We are here today to celebrate many accomplishments that we've made over the past 17 years, many of the struggles we have gone through," said MOTAC president Vickie Young. "And to recognize those who have contributed to our successes."

MOTAC president Vickie Young speaks at the group's annual recognition luncheon Friday. Award recipients were:

- Chacha Longoria, volunteer of the year;
- Omaha Public Power District, smoke-free business of the year;
- Mt. Sinai Church, faith communities in tobacco control;
- Ira Combs, medical professional for the cause;
- Victoria Young, youth advocate of the year.

"We have a lot of different partners that help us in the work we do on tobacco prevention and control throughout the year," said Megan Franklin, MOTAC secretary.

"So we think it's important to recognize all the members of the community that help make tobacco prevention and control in Nebraska, and in Omaha in particular, worthwhile . . . that are doing something to progress the issue."

Speakers included MOTAC president Young, Jeff Soukup of Tobacco-Free Nebraska, and other MOTAC members.

The date of the luncheon was picked, Franklin said, so the award ceremony would coincide with the implementation Monday of the new statewide smoking ban and with World No-Tobacco day on May 31.

"We felt like having it the Friday before all that stuff happened would be kind of a good tie-in," Franklin said.

Between 50 and 65 people attended the luncheon, held at the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Thompson Alumni Center, 6705 Dodge St.