

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **First Federally Qualified Health Center in Southern Lake County Opens in Merrillville**

MERRILLVILLE, IN – Regional Health Clinic, the first federally qualified health center (FQHC) in southern Lake County and the fourth FQHC for Regional Mental Health Center (Regional), celebrated its grand opening in Merrillville on Tuesday, September 19. The grand opening, attended by Congressman Pete Visclosky and Ross Township Trustee Joseph Shudick, highlighted the need to integrate physical and behavioral health care services.

“Primary care has become the gateway for many individuals with both primary care and behavioral health needs,” said Regional Mental Health Center CEO Bob Krumwied. “And many of our behavioral health clients we see at the Strawhun Center lack a primary care physician. This is a concern because, unfortunately, those with mental illness who do not receive integrated health care services die 25 years earlier than individuals without mental illness or behavioral health concerns.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Health Resources and Services Administration provided Regional with a grant to open the Merrillville FQHC. The grant is part of the federal agency’s effort to expand and integrate mental health and substance abuse services in medically underserved populations.

“I am grateful for the work that community health centers are doing in Northwest Indiana to provide access to high quality, cost effective health care,” said Congressman Visclosky. “Community health centers help build stronger, healthier communities, and I will continue to support their efforts.”

Regional identified the need for a federally qualified health center to serve southern Lake County’s population suffering from behavioral health issues. This effort aligns with Regional’s strategies to improve health care outcomes and to mainstream mental health by recognizing that mental, physical and social health cannot be separated. “By integrating primary care services of an FQHC with Regional’s mental health services—in addition to the social and early education services offered by the Geminus Corporation—Regional becomes equipped to treat the whole person, eventually impacting a community’s overall health,” said Krumwied.

"This is a great day for the people of Ross Township and the greater Northwest Indiana region," said Ross Township Trustee Joseph Shudick. "Access to quality primary and behavioral health care is an important building block that helps our communities grow and prosper, and this new health clinic adjacent to a community mental health center will help improve our communities health and serve as a valuable resource."

The Regional Health Clinic in Merrillville is housed at Regional’s Strawhun Center—a community mental health center that provides a variety of behavioral health services—located on Taft Street, just south of U.S. 30. The community health center is the only FQHC in southern Lake County, and the second in the county to share a physical location with a mental health center.

### **About Regional Health Clinic**

Regional Health Clinic is a division of Regional Mental Health Center (Regional), which works with Geminus Corporation to build stronger communities through comprehensive continuum of patient care—care that supports a patient’s emotional, physical and cognitive well-being. As a federally qualified health center, Regional Health Clinic provides affordable and accessible primary care to women, children and men at four sites in Lake County. For more information about the clinic and its services, please visit [regionalhealthclinic.org](http://regionalhealthclinic.org).

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**About Regional Mental Health Center**

*A respected nonprofit agency, Regional Mental Health Center has successfully provided mental health care management and treatment for clients for more than 40 years. We work with adults, teens and youth who need mental health services, behavior health services, primary medical care services, dental services and treatment for addiction. Individual, group or family therapy is available. Anyone can request services by contacting 219-769-4005, a referral is not needed. Please visit [RegionalMentalHealth.org](http://RegionalMentalHealth.org) for more information.*