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## *House of Representatives*

### VISCLOSKY HONORS AN OPEN DOOR CHURCH

**Mr. Speaker:** It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today to congratulate An Open Door Church on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In honor of this momentous milestone, a celebratory reception will be held on Wednesday, July 6, 2011 at An Open Door Church in Hammond, Indiana. For 25 years, An Open Door Church has been committed to the spiritual and social conditions of residents living in the Hammond area as well as in the greater Northwest Indiana community.

Founded on July 6, 1986 in South Holland, Illinois, by Doctors and Pastors Meredith and Marilyn Shackelford, An Open Door Church began as a small congregation in the basement of the pastors' home. Quickly outgrowing this small space, the church began to rent space, and, after eight years, it was able to purchase its first building in Hammond. The church's congregation continued to grow and the church moved to its current location on Hohman Avenue in Hammond, Indiana six years ago. Currently, the church has an impressive membership of more than 350 congregants.

The church and its parishioners follow a visionary motto, "reaching people to reach the world," which is carried out through the church's various ministries and programs that work to support change in the lives of others. An Open Door Church places a strong emphasis on the family unit, and has built its organization around the belief that strong families build strong communities. The church's dedication to the welfare of residents in Northwest Indiana is demonstrated through its many outreach projects which include: a summer concert series at Harrison Park where school supplies are distributed to children in need; Wee Care, a child development ministry; a food pantry ministry that feeds over 75 families per month; Give God a Chance, a marriage ministry; a prison outreach ministry; various children and teen ministries; and the Christian Academy, which provides education for grades kindergarten through grade eight. In addition, the church has partnered with numerous community organizations in order to improve the quality of life for countless individuals. These organizations include Calumet Project, Interfaith Worker Justice, and Northwest Indiana Reinvestment Alliance. An Open Door Church, its founders, and its ministry directors show uncompromising loyalty to the community of Northwest Indiana and they are worthy of the highest praise.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in honoring An Open Door Church for its exceptional community service ministry and to congratulate the organization on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The founders and congregation of this truly admirable organization continue to touch the lives of numerous people, and for this selfless, lifelong service they are to be commended.