

# TODAY'S SUNBEAM

## Event 'Bridges' minority gap

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By **PHILIP SEAN CURRAN**  
Staff Writer

CARNEYS POINT TWP. -- Patricia Braxton had all the makings of becoming another statistic: a black woman growing up without a father and in poverty in South Philadelphia.

But she didn't let that happen. Instead, she excelled in school, went off to college and became an educator and later an administrator.

She's passionate about helping black and minority students, such that she and others will seek to make a difference starting with an event this week.

"Bridging the Gap" is intended to have families, educational, business and religious leaders partner to help minority children perform better in the classroom. The event (10 a.m. to noon) will be held next Saturday in Davidow Hall located on the campus of Salem Community College.

"Bridging the Gap" is sponsored by Calvary Community Development Corp., a self-described faith-based group started in 2000. It founders were members of the Second Baptist Church of Pedricktown who wanted to confront such problems as teen pregnancy, substance abuse as well as focus on other ways to improve the community.

Braxton, a board member of Calvary Community Development Corp., works for Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional Board of Education.

The goal is to find ways to close an achievement gap between white and minority students by getting families and schools to work together. At Saturday's program one of the key items to be focused on is why minority students are falling behind.

In New Jersey, white students do better than their black counterparts and were less likely to drop out of school, according to a recent report by the state Department of Education. Black students trail other minority groups such as Asians and, increasingly, Hispanics.

Marc Jackson, formerly of the Philadelphia 76ers, now with the New Jersey Nets, will be the keynote speaker. He'll be available to sign autographs, pose for pictures and even give a basketball clinic.

The event is free. Children between the ages of 6 and 17 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

For information, call 769-2304 or 299-2380 or log onto [www.calvarycdc.net](http://www.calvarycdc.net).