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Consultant uses RAP to motivate youth

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Of The Morning Call

When Calvin Mackie discusses the "Uninhibited Power of RAP" with area youth in Bethlehem tomorrow, he will not be discussing the musical impact of Snoop Doggy Dog or the late Eazy-E.

For Mackie, a partner in Channel Zero, a Georgia-based motivational and educational consulting firm, RAP is an acronym for "respect, accountability and productivity."

With these words as a foundation, he hopes to help a young audience develop "a greater sense of self and greater determination."

"We are just trying to take old lessons and put them in a new package," said Mackie, who will speak at Comfort Suites,

120 W. 3rd St., Bethlehem at 3 p.m. tomorrow. The session, which is open to the public, is sponsored by Obsidian and Strive as part of their youth outreach. A \$3 donation is requested.

Obsidian is a networking organization for area African Americans. Strive, in partnership with Obsidian, is a youth-oriented organization that encourages academic improvement.

Mackie and his partner, James Davis, are members of Phi Beta Kappa honor society and working on doctorate degrees in engineering and mathematics. Mackie said they both are first generation college students and had to overcome many of the obstacles that face the youth their company tries to reach.

"Jim and I both were not the best of students when we were in high school,"

he said. "Based on our SAT scores, we should not be doing what we are doing now."

But despite what some may have thought of SAT scores of about 800, the young men were driven to accomplishment by strong family values, thrift and hard work.

They hope to pass on these ideas. Short, attention-getting acronyms like RAP, EAT (education, attitude and timing) and SEX (something extra) help move the message.

"We feel those three things are dominating the mentality of people today," Mackie said during a phone interview from his Decatur, Ga., home. "We try to take what can be negative things and make positives out of them," he said.

In the Lehigh Valley presentation, which targets youth ages 10 to 18, Mackie will seek audience volunteers and use props to illustrate the lessons he hopes to teach.

"We dress like the kids, we listen to the same music, we are affected by some of the same things," he said. "The language we speak has some of the same currents as what they speak." This adds legitimacy and may help youths who tune out other approaches, he said. "If you walk in with a shirt and tie on, it's over," he said. "They have to believe you are real."

"A lot of times I actually quote rappers, but I quote rap and put an entirely different spin on it."

Mackie, born in Louisiana, said his determination to succeed came from "par-

ents who made me believe in myself and instilled a work ethic."

His father dropped out of school in sixth grade to pick cotton, he said. "They never gave me the money to buy the clothes and the shoes, but when I graduated from high school I had \$2,000 in the bank."

He had saved it from years of mowing lawns and washing cars.

The name Channel Zero "ties into the whole media craze" and rouses curiosity, Mackie said.

They also emphasize the importance of the number zero, he said. "We try to make them see that zero is something and to tie that into their lives."

For more program information, call (610) 432-2296.