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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **GOVERNOR VISITS CLEAR VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEWARK TO HELP CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Gov. Christie Whitman today visited the Clear View Baptist Church in Newark to help celebrate Black History Month and to highlight the many contributions of African Americans.

"This is a month for remembering and retelling the history of African Americans in New Jersey and across the nation," the Governor said. "Of course, it's important to recall the horrors of slavery, the injustice of discrimination, and the struggle for civil rights. It's vital that we tell the stories of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, of Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

"But we should also take time to honor great African Americans who contributed to our nation and our state in other ways - teachers, business people, writers .people from every walk of life," she said.

Gov. Whitman said because New Jersey is a leader in scientific discovery, it is important to highlight the lives and accomplishments of African American inventors, including those who have New Jersey connections.

For instance, she said, Lewis Latimer, the son of a runaway slave born 150 years ago, had the honor of working alongside two famous inventors, Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell. The Governor said many of Lewis Latimer's ideas were included in the light bulb that Edison invented in New Jersey.

Gov. Whitman said other African American inventors included Andrew Beard, Garrett Morgan and Frederick Jones. Beard invented a device to hook train cars together automatically and Morgan invented an automatic stop sign which later became the traffic light. Jones invented a machine that delivered movie tickets and designed the first refrigerated trucks.

The Governor also spoke of another African American, Sarah Breedlove Walker, who invented hair products for women and hired hundreds of women to sell her products. She was a millionaire when she died 80 years ago, Gov. Whitman said.

"What do all of these people have in common?" the Governor asked. "Obviously, their African American heritage. But they also had sharp minds. They had dreams of making things better. And they had determination to make a difference."

"Inside every person is the potential to make a difference," Gov. Whitman said. "A person's choice of a career isn't the most important thing. The most important thing is that they work hard and try to be the best at whatever they choose."