



## **Living History Program to Explore African-American Civil War Contributions**

Voices of Freedom, a Gloucester County based troupe, will present a “Living History” program on Sunday, March 7, 2010, at 3:00 p.m. at Angel Visit Baptist Church, 29566 Tidewater Trail, Dunnsville, Virginia. Troupe members in period costume will tell the little-known stories of several African Americans who made significant contributions in the Civil War.

The afternoon will begin with *The Forgotten Fourteen*, a short film about the Battle of Newmarket Heights (near Richmond International Airiport) which took place on September 29, 1864. The film tells the story of the fourteen members of the United States Colored Troops who were awarded the Medal of Honor (MOH) for their bravery during that battle.

The troupe will present a conversation between Thomas Morris Chester, the only African-American correspondent reporting for a major publication during the Civil War, and James Daniel Gardner, of Gloucester County, Virginia, a member of the United States Colored Troops. Chester, who covered the War for *The Philadelphia Press*, will be played by Chauncey Herring while Gardner will be played by Wesley Wilson. Chester will interview Gardner, who was one the fourteen soldiers who received the MOH for the Battle of Newmarket Heights. .

Youth members of the Voices of Freedom troupe will relate the contributions of some of the approximately 18,000 Black Civil War sailors. At least seventy of these sailors came from the Middle Peninsula, with thirty-nine coming from Essex and twenty-seven from Middlesex. One of them, Robert Blake, is believed to be buried on the Middle Peninsula.

Sketches will be presented of members of the “Black Dispatch,” a group of African-American women who were Civil War spies for the Union Army. One of them, Elizabeth Bowser, was a house servant for Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Sandra Cherry will portray Harriet Tubman in her little known role as “General Tubman,” the only American woman to have ever led combat troops behind enemy lines.

A question and answer period will follow the presentations, and refreshments will be served. The program is free and open to the public.

The Voices of Freedom “Living History” program is sponsored by the Middle Peninsula African-American Genealogical and Historical Society, the Essex County Museum and Historical Society, the Essex County Sesquicentennial Committee, and the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society. For further information about the program, call 804-443-9900 or 804-758-5163.

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Above: pictures of Wesley Wilson and Chauncey Herring in period costume

For further information, call  
Bessida White at 804-651-8753 or Reeves Pogue at 804-443-4900