

Historic Village To Host Storyteller

Submitted by Ann Lindblad

OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE
STATEWIDE

Old Sturbridge Village is ringing in the new year by offering free admission for children in January (a \$7 value per child). Through Jan. 31, all kids aged 17 and under get free admission to the Village when accompanied by an adult (the offer does not apply to educational groups of 10 or more).

The museum is offering special programs for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday on Monday, featuring storyteller and museum educator Tammy Denease, of East Hartford, who will present "Honoring a Slave Heroine: The Mumbet Story." The presentation is based on the inspiring true story of Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman, a young slave woman who won her freedom in court in 1781.

All MLK Day programs at the

Village are included in museum admission. For details: 800-SEE-1830; www.osv.org.

To win her freedom, Mumbet cited language in the Massachusetts constitution: "all men are born free and equal," and her case was a precursor to the 1783 decision that ended slavery in Massachusetts. She once said, "Anytime while I was a slave, if one minute's freedom had been offered to me, and I was told I would die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it, just to stand on God's green earth a free woman."

After spending 30 years as a slave in the household of Col. John Ashley, of Sheffield, Mass., Mumbet hired a lawyer, Theodore Sedgwick, and successfully sued for her freedom in court. Once free, she took the name Elizabeth Freeman, and was employed by the Sedgwick family as a nurse, healer and midwife.

Storyteller Denease grew up in Mississippi listening to stories told by her own great-grandmother, a former slave who lived to the age of 125.

"It's amazing to me that living now, nearly 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation that I personally knew — and loved dearly — someone who survived slavery," Denease says. "I draw on my great-grandmother's own life story for inspiration

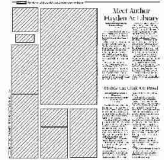
when portraying Mumbet."

Other activities at Old Sturbridge Village on MLK Day and throughout the month include ice skating (bring your own skates), sledding on 1830s-style sleds, and sleigh rides (snow permitting). After enjoying the museum's outdoor winter activities, visitors can warm up indoors beside one of the Village's many cozy fireplaces and take part in hands-on crafts and activities. Children can also spend time "pretending" in Old Sturbridge Village's popular "KidStory" indoor play area.

With more than 40 restored buildings — farmhouses, mills, meetinghouses, and craft shops, Old Sturbridge Village is one of the country's oldest and largest living history museums and celebrates early New England life from 1790-1840.

Located just off the Mass.-Turnpike and Routes I-84 and 20 in Sturbridge, Mass., the Village is open Wed.-Sun. 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. and on all Monday holidays.

Children age 17 and under receive free admission through Jan. 31. Normal admission is: \$20 for adults; \$18 for seniors; \$7 for children aged 3-17; and children under 3 are admitted free. For details, visit www.osv.org or call 800-SEE-1830.





READER SUBMITTED

TAMMY DENEASE, of East Hartford, will portray slave heroine Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman at Old Sturbridge Village on Monday for Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The museum is offering free admission for children during January.