



YAK CHAT

The Yak hopes everyone is back on track after a snowy start to the month!

You can read more about the wild weather everywhere on Page 6.

Brightening the Yak's day was a trip to a Detroit artist's studio. Meet Shirley Woodson, Pages 2 and 3.

For one 12-year-old, winter brought a big trip and a chance to meet some leaders. Be inspired by her tale, Page 4.

And follow the Yak's tracks in the snow back to the Howell Nature Center for a perfect date with a porcupine, Page 5.

Just like you, the Yak will be on winter break next week. Yak's Corner magazine returns on March 3!

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- » More planets, Page 6.
- » Your art, Page 7.

ON THE COVER:

Dorsey, a porcupine, munches some bark at the Howell Conference and Nature Center. Look closely to see her bright orange teeth and pink tongue!

Cover photo by Per Kjeldsen

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An artist draws on discoveries

Meet Shirley Woodson

We hope you read last week's story on the "Art of the Masters" show at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. This week, we chat with one of the show's best-known artists, Shirley Woodson, 74, in her Detroit studio.

You've been called a "colorist." What does that mean? "Well, my work is very colorful. In looking at what contemporary artists usually do, color ranges to very muted shades, but my color is bright. To me, art is color."

Do artists actually study color? "Oh, forever! One thing I discovered is that color is greatly dependent on light. You can have a painting in a room with no light or one lamp on and the painting looks one way. Then you put light on it, the sun comes out and it's a totally different image. And I learned that you can layer color – one color can be beneath another color."

Do you have a favorite palette, or choice of colors? "My favorite colors are red and green. And I don't mean an apple and grass. I mean grapes. I mean everything that red encompasses, everything that green encompasses. Those are just colors I'm drawn to – and yellow."

What's your favorite season, color-wise? "Spring. It's that first green lawn, this lovely shade of green. And the forsythia – It's that pale yellow, and beautiful against the snow and early greenery. And then the tulips and other flowers come up. It's always a joy."

When did you discover art? "I was known as an artist in elementary school. I was selected to do the big murals at Thanksgiving. I was maybe six. Then I was selected to go to art classes after school at another school, and eventually I was recommended to go to the Detroit Institute of



Detroit artist Shirley Woodson with one of her many colorful paintings, "Dreams."

Arts' Saturday classes."

The White House has your work. How did that happen? "I was asked to send some eggs for the Easter egg extravaganza. They sent me these little wooden eggs, and they asked me to decorate them. I did a little ocean on the egg and named it, "Splash." I did two of them, Splash 1 and 2."

Is water still a theme? "Yes. It began with the Nile River, with a painting I did called, "Shield of the Nile." Of course everybody likes water. It's scenic and we're on the Detroit River. I always looked at water symbolically in my painting, as a source of healing and nurturing. Water is a major force in our world."

Doesn't your painting in "Art of the Masters" have a water theme?

"Oh, yes. It's the fish and it's the horse and then the people. At the top of the painting, there's sort of a line – it's the top of the water. But the people are in the water. Actually the viewer is in the water. Everything is in the water! The horse is another theme of mine. It represents freedom."



"The Four of Us"