

## Student Scientist Selected to Participate in NASA Virtual Reality Academy



Bria Harris, Student Scientist

According to a new market research report published by *Markets and Markets*, the virtual reality market is expected to grow at annual rate of 15.18% from 2013 to 2018 and is expected to reach \$1.06 Billion in annual sales by 2018. Though the growth in the use of virtual reality systems is increasing each year, there are very few people that understand the technology and how to use it.

Companies, large and small, are working to assess the benefits of VRS, while at the same time, find and develop talent to fill the skill void. Bria Harris, a student research scientist in the Ecotek Lab program and a junior at Detroit Edison Early College of Excellence, has been selected by NASA to participate in its Virtual Reality Academy. She is one of only 8 students in the United States that were accepted into this unique program.

NASA's Discovery Lab Global VRA is a 12-hour, self-directed online course. The 12 hours are spread over six weeks, and contain tutorials in virtual world building, scripting, 3D modeling, and game design. The primary application development platform being used is OpenSim software. All projects are done in cooperation with a NASA virtual reality expert.

Virtual reality technology is very important to space exploration. For example, NASA has developed a Virtual Reality Laboratory (VRL) at the Johnson Space Center that integrates real time graphics and motion simulators with tendon-driven robotic devices that provide the kinesthetic sensation of the mass and inertia characteristics of large objects in space. Information gathered using the technologies in this VRL will help NASA scientists better understand how the human body will respond to changes in gravitational pull.

Being accepted into NASA's Global VRA is a great milestone achievement for Bria. She has spent many long hours in the lab building up her capacity in designing and developing 3D virtual reality applications. Learning how to construct, integrate and animate objects in a 3D spatial environment is not easy. Bria has hands-on experience in developing virtual applications using Unity3D, OpenSim and LeapMotion software.

### **About the Ecotek Science Program**

Ecotek is a science research lab program for young inventors and researchers in grades 5 thru 12. Student scientists work on projects aligned with the issues being addressed by world leaders at the United Nations. To learn more about Ecotek Lab go to <http://www.ecotek-us.com>

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