



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Isle of Man students hail 'life-changing experience' at NASA United Space School**

**Douglas, Isle of Man – 19 September 2016**

There aren't many students who can give what must be one of the coolest answers to that age-old question, 'what did you get up to in the summer holidays?' by answering 'I helped NASA plan a trip to Mars'.

Rose ten Donkelaar from Ramsey Grammar School, Laurence Couch from Castle Rushen High School and Julius Herzig from King William's College did just that after winning the annual scholarships to the NASA United Space School in Houston, provided by Isle of Man satellite firm, ManSat Ltd.

The students spent two weeks working with astronauts, engineers and scientists in Houston, alongside peers from 21 other countries around the world as they planned a simulated mission to Mars.

Their efforts were recognised at a presentation at the Department of Education and Children offices in Hamilton House, when they received certificates from DEC Minister Tim Crookall MLC.

'The Space School experience was so mind-blowing that it's hard to put into words how amazing and life-changing it was,' said Rose, who is studying maths, computer science and drama at A-level. 'I'm fairly sure it has helped me decide that going into the space industry, in some way, is what I want to pursue.'

'The entire two weeks were super cool – very informative and education, but also the out of school activities, including a pool party, Tex-Mex night, and going to see a football match.'

'The graduation was the most enjoyable part, as that was when I realised we now had an international family and community that I can call on whenever I need them. Plus, the fact I got to speak to astronaut Luca Parmitano and tell him about the Isle of Man was really amazing! On behalf of Julius, Laurence and myself, I'd like to thank ManSat for this incredible opportunity.'

Julius is studying the International Baccalaureate, including maths, physics and chemistry at Higher Level. He said: 'It was a truly unique experience. For the Mars



mission, my team was responsible for landing and taking-off from Mars, and we designed a lander, a take-off vehicle and a method of producing fuel on Mars.

'There were many different speakers on various topics. In particular I found Doug Archer's presentation on the Curiosity rover, ManSat CEO Chris Stott's talk on space law, and Glenn Johnson's demonstration of ISS equipment very inspiring.

'Over the two weeks I learned a tremendous amount. It will be a memory for a lifetime. I have many new friends, and we are already planning a reunion next year.'

Laurence, who is studying chemistry, history and physics at A-level, said: 'My team was in charge of designing the mission control, and handling the budget of the mission. I worked with some amazing people from the US, Germany, Bolivia, Columbia, New Zealand and Russia, who I know I'll stay in touch with for a long time to come.

'Each student stayed in a host family's house for the two weeks, along with other students. What has stuck in my mind is the quality of the relationships I formed during the fortnight; I became friends with so many incredible people.

'Other particular highlights were visiting the Johnson Space Center, where we were awarded special priority guest status, and allowed to enter the mission control room from which they sent astronauts to the moon, and sit where the mission controllers sat – it really was an awesome experience.

'I think I have grown greatly as a person and have gained an opportunity which most people could only dream of. I have had the time of my life, and would absolutely encourage anybody to apply for the programme, it's terrific!'

ManSat carries out satellite filings for the Isle of Man under a contract with the Isle of Man Government's Communications Commission. This year's trip means that 30 Island students have now won ManSat scholarships to the NASA United Space School since the company started the competition in 2000. In 2007 the number of scholarships increased from one to two, and this year was the first for which three students were chosen.

Chris Stott said: 'As always, the feedback we have received from the Space School tutors about our Isle of Man students has been excellent. The standard of A-level and International Baccalaureate students the Island produces continues to be consistently exceptional and we are proud of everything Rose, Julius and Laurence achieved during their time in Houston. I'm sure they will go on to great things in their further studies and careers.'



ManSat Chief Financial Officer Ian Sanders explained: 'We are grateful to the Department of Education and Children for its long-standing support for the scholarships, and I will soon be visiting each of the secondary schools and King William's College to speak to Year 12 students about the competition to win places at the Space School in July 2017.'

Tim Crookall MLC, Minister for Education and Children, said: 'It is always a pleasure to meet the Space School scholars who represent the Island each year, and Rose, Julius and Laurence have proved to be fine ambassadors for the Isle of Man. The scholarships provided by ManSat are an excellent example of the private sector and Government working together to inspire our younger generation and give them the opportunity to experience something that will stay with them forever, whichever path they choose. We look forward to continuing this partnership with ManSat in the years to come.'

Please visit [www.unitedspaceschool.org](http://www.unitedspaceschool.org) for more information about the Space School and [www.mansat.org](http://www.mansat.org) for details of the company's scholarships, and [www.mansat.com](http://www.mansat.com) for more details on ManSat itself.

**ENDS**

**(924 words)**

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

### **ManSat Limited**

ManSat carries out satellite filings for the Isle of Man under a contract with the Isle of Man Government's Communications Commission. Isle of Man's satellite filings are made to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in Geneva via the administration of the United Kingdom (Ofcom).

Established in May 1998, ManSat Limited is a Manx registered and Manx owned private limited company headquartered in Douglas in the Isle of Man, with offices and representation in the United Kingdom and the United States.

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