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‘Saints’ student to participate in prestigious Stanford University hackathon competition



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STEMGuyana member Ariel Taylor

ST STANISLAUS College student, Ariel Taylor, has been accepted into Stanford University's premier and largest hackathon, TreeHacks 2022, which will run from February 18 – 20. A member of STEMGuyana since 2018 through the Sports Hall STEM club, Taylor, a two-time member of Team Guyana Robotics, was blown away when she received the acceptance email from Stanford.

“I was very shocked because the acceptance rate is really low and I really didn't expect that. When I got the email I was just so happy and shocked about it,” the 16-year-old shared in a recent interview with the Guyana Chronicle.

Stanford's annual TreeHacks brings together over 1,000 students to Stanford every February. Around 2,000 students in over 15 countries participated in the competition in 2021. Stanford University is one of the top private universities in the United States of America.

Founder of STEMGuyana, Karen Abrams, said Taylor's acceptance into the prestigious programme is indicative of the kind of skills available in Guyana, and just how well STEM is developing in Guyana.

"What this means for her, and the country, is that based on her experiences and qualifications she is able to compete on a global level and make herself competitive to get into such a programme, which is extremely good," Abrams commented.

She noted how ecstatic STEMGuyana is for Taylor, and how much they look forward to even more similar such accomplishments and development for its members.

"This is what we want for all of our members. This is why we do the things we do at STEMGuyana to encourage our young people to think creatively, globally and to think about solving problems," she said.

She added that: "This can open her up to so many more global opportunities. Ariel has been with us since she was about 12 year old as a member of our STEM club and I am extremely proud and so are her coaches and all the other persons involved in her technical development over the years."

Taylor applied for the programme after it was suggested to the STEMGuyana members last month in a social media group where members regularly encourage each other.

Notwithstanding her thoughts that it might be challenging to get accepted, Taylor did not hesitate to put in an application and Stanford was impressed with what she had to say.

"In the application I informed them about my robotics experience and how I enjoy doing this kind of things and I think that contributed to why they picked me," she shared.

TreeHacks 2022 will be the eighth edition of the hackathon and is being held under the theme, "Hacking for the future: addressing deeply impactful problems and building creative, unique solutions."

For the competition, participants will be placed into groups of four where they will spend 36 hours developing a novel project in one of five global and technological challenge categories. This year, the categories are: privacy, security and safety, healthcare, sustainability, web 3.0, and accessibility.

Taylor is currently preparing as best she can for the competition.

"Right now I'm doing research on the topics that they would have [sic] put out and I'm preparing ahead of time for it, so that when we get to that point where we have to get together and talk about it, I am well prepared," she said.