

ADAM FLAGAN, ASTRONAUT TRAINER

Biography

A CIRI shareholder of Yupik and Russian descent, Adam Flagan was raised in the Palmer area by a family who adopted him as well as four other children. While three of his adopted siblings have developmental and physical disabilities, Flagan is proud of his family and feels fortunate to have been raised in such a unique and remarkable environment. His family inspired him to have the confidence, courage, and motivation to go out there and make a difference.

Flagan's favorite high school subjects were math and science. He went on to study engineering at Adams State College in Colorado. He then transferred to Colorado School of Mines, where he excelled academically and was awarded a \$16,000 CIRI Foundation scholarship. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in engineering with a mechanical specialty. According to Flagan, The CIRI Foundation scholarship was instrumental in motivating him to do well in school and in helping him realize his career goals.

After graduation, Flagan went to work for United Space Alliance, which is a contractor for NASA. He trains astronauts to operate the shuttle and use its equipment during space flights. He says training shuttle crew members for space travel "is both very challenging and rewarding because each shuttle mission has a new look and feel to it. Every time I train astronauts for a specific mission I have totally new issues and hardware to incorporate into my lessons."

These days, Flagan is busy training crew members on how to escape from the space shuttle during an emergency situation. Escape methods focus on different ways to exit the shuttle in as fast and safe a manner as possible.

Most recently, Flagan was in Florida training crew members for a Mode 8, in-flight bailout over open sea. This is an extreme emergency situation, which occurs when the shuttle crash-lands back to earth and crew members must parachute out before impact. Once in the ocean, they climb into a one-person life raft and perform water survival techniques until a helicopter search and rescue team finds them.

Flagan actively participated in this training exercise and noted it took search and rescue forces 2.5 hours to find him and hoist him up into the helicopter. The experience gave him a new understanding of how best to handle these kinds of emergency situations.

Currently the shuttle is mainly used for construction of an International Space Station (ISS) being built in outer space, near the earth's orbit. Of the new space stations, NASA says, "The ISS is an unmatched multinational endeavor in science, technology, and industrial cooperation . . . work performed on board the ISS will benefit the citizens of the United States and our global partners by taking full advantage of the unique environment of space."

In addition, shuttle missions are also directly involved with important research about earth. Flagan says, "It's amazing the amount of information we are learning every day. For instance, I remember how unreliable weather prediction used to be. Now we can track tornadoes and give people ample warning ahead of time so they can get to safety. Learning more about earth via shuttle missions is truly exciting. This is why the new space station will be crucial in better understanding our own planet, our solar system and the rest of the universe as well. It's so important to have some kind of perspective of the big picture. Yet, it's also quite humbling and awe-inspiring to have a more sweeping sense of things because, inevitably, you realize how remarkable it all really is."