

Dominican Student's Photo at World Affairs Council Exhibit

A double major in international studies and political science in the Honors Program, the Dominican junior has joined clubs, committed to projects, sought scholarships and traveled afar beginning with a life-changing trip to Uganda following her freshman year that yielded a chance meeting and an incredible eye-catching photograph she snapped. The photo – which Fitipaldi labeled “Pray” – was accepted for the World Affairs Council’s juried “Global Visions 2013” exhibition, which began October 2 in San Francisco.

The photo is a sample of Fitipaldi’s ability to seize the moment since she arrived at Dominican.

“In the very first week at Dominican I realized that I made right decision,” says Fitipaldi, a native of Uruguay who lives in Novato. “From the very beginning, so many opportunities came about. I hadn’t even been here for six months and they already had chosen me to go on the (Uganda) trip ... From then on, opportunities just kept coming. I’m very grateful.”

In 2012, Fitipaldi applied to participate in a trip with eight other Dominican students to Uganda. She was teaching about 150-200 villagers about hygiene at a public health workshop in various communities around Mytiana.

On a visit to a very small village near Lake Wamala, Fitipaldi, who took a photography class in high school at Marin Catholic, noticed a little girl, about four years old, staring up at her. Fitipaldi was immediately taken as the girl, with big eyes and her palms pressed together, projected a heart-warming image of respect and an appreciation. It was an opportune moment for Fitipaldi and she captured it with a photograph.

It was one of about 8,000 photos Fitipaldi took in Uganda.

“That photograph most properly conveyed the image of this cute little girl – everyone in the group noticed her tenderness and beauty; she stood out,” Fitipaldi says. “I have fallen in love with traveling. I love to take pictures of my travels. It makes the experience more powerful.”

Last March, Fitipaldi received a scholarship from the World Affairs Council to participate in its annual conference in San Francisco. The WAC’s Marin County chapter then selected her to work as an intern. Then, this past summer, Fitipaldi learned that she is one of only 22 photographers who would have their photos on display at WAC headquarters in San Francisco through November 21.

Fitipaldi’s eye for a great photo is just a small example of talent and vision for the future.

“I honestly believe that Magdalena is going to be a household name someday,” says Gigi Gokcek, Associate Professor in the [Dominican’s Department of Political Science and International Studies](#). “Magda has a bright future ahead of her, not only because of her strong academics and drive, but also because of her lovable nature. She is compassionate, caring, responsible, polite, considerate, and very mindful of people around the world.”

It is Fitipaldi’s goal to see as much of the world as she can. The trip to Uganda inspired her to apply for and participate as a sophomore in an alternative spring break trip to Mexico earlier this year to work in a soup kitchen and organize a carnival for local children. She already has applied

to study abroad through the International Student Exchange Programs (ISEP) for the 2014 spring semester.

“All the great things that have happened to me during my time at Dominican are because I just applied,” Fitipaldi says. “If you are slightly interested in it, go for it.”

That was the case in May when Fitipaldi applied for and received a scholarship to participate in the Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN) 19th Annual Women and International Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C. Fitipaldi also has participated in Dominican’s Vote Smart Challenge and, on Election Day 2012, she joined other Dominican Political Science students in a national research project focused on voting differences across the country and the media’s use of exit polls.

Uruguay is the ultimate destination where Fitipaldi feels she could make a difference and help improve the lives of its citizens. Her family left there when she was 10 years old after economic crisis and political instability in South America forced her parents to migrate to the United States. Fitipaldi’s dream to return Uruguay was fueled by her freshman-year experience in Uganda.

“When I look back now and think about what my life goals are, what I have done and what I still want to accomplish, it all goes back to the lessons I learned on that trip,” says Fitipaldi, who also is pursuing a minor in leadership studies at Dominican. “The more that time passes from my trip to Uganda, the more I realize how much it’s changed my life.”

September 11, 2013