

*“When I was a little girl, I used to spend hours looking for ladybugs. Finally, I’d just give up and fall asleep in the grass. When I woke up, they were crawling all over me...”* (From “Under the Tuscan Sun”)

On my desk, tucked in a picture frame of me and my friends, sits a small, white strip of paper reading, “You will be coming into a fortune”. This is, of course, from a Chinese fortune cookie that I received on my birthday this year. I have since been patiently waiting for my said fortune and looking around every corner to find out what God has planned for me this year. Of course as soon as you stop looking, your fortune finds you.

To look back over the past 6 months seems unreal to me. To actually picture and physically feel how I had felt and where I was in my life the day I left home feels surreal. Feelings of uncertainty, doubt, excitement of the unknown, fear and hope are what come to mind. Now looking back, I cannot believe how much has happened that I never could have predicted.

As every Dominican Volunteer should, I had dutifully formed goals during our DVUSA Orientation, but upon starting my work at Holy Name of Jesus School, my main focus was survival; not knowing what to expect, I simply wanted to make it through the year, while hopefully making a difference along the way. Without even realizing it, my focus had completely shifted. Every day, I became increasingly comfortable with the children I was helping, the teachers with whom I was working, and the tutors with whom I was teaching to be mentors. Before I knew it, I became “Miss Monica”. I had developed a life in Grand Rapids with friends, a family in my home community and a true purpose. When I had thought that my ministry would just be one of the four pillars that would be integrated into this year of my life, it actually touched every single part of my life.

My fortune found me. As soon as I stopped looking around every corner for a reason for my being in this particular place and time, my purpose was pouring out of me. I never could have predicted this new life of mine, but the surprises and small miracles that happen every day before my very eyes are what influence and inspire me to no end. I know that my time here will affect me continually and although I am beginning to see the fortunes that have found me so far, I will not even begin to fully realize the purpose and impact of them until much later in life.



*Monica Pruneau is pictured above with one of her third grade students. Monica is a current Dominican Volunteer. She was a student at Fontbonne University in St. Louis.*