

Trojans, far from their families, spend Thanksgiving at the USC president's house

C. L. Max Nikias and his wife, Niki C. Nikias, hosted more than 300 students for a special holiday dinner



*(From left) First Lady Niki C. Nikias pictured with USC students Garima Arora and Harsha Bhanu
Photo by Steve Cohn*

By Andrea Bennett

For Budapest, Hungary-born USC sophomore Lilla Spanyi, Thanksgiving is so special precisely because it is an American holiday.

“My family doesn’t actually celebrate Thanksgiving, but I am in a weird position where I consider myself American because of the culture and the people, and I can’t really imagine a future for myself anywhere else,” said Spanyi, a Trustee Scholar and member of the Trojan Marching Band Silks. “That is why Thanksgiving has always been a holiday I wanted to celebrate, but didn’t have the opportunity until I came to USC.”

Spanyi was one of more than 300 USC students hosted for Thanksgiving dinner by Niki C. Nikias, wife of USC President

C. L. Max Nikias. The annual dinner at the USC president’s home brings together Trojans unable to spend the holiday with their families.

Being away from family on Thanksgiving can be hard for students like USC junior Alexis Brady. Back home in Maryville, Tenn., Brady and up to 30 family members spend the entire holiday cooking traditional dishes, watching movies, and playing dominoes and spades together.

“It gets pretty crazy, which I love,” she said.

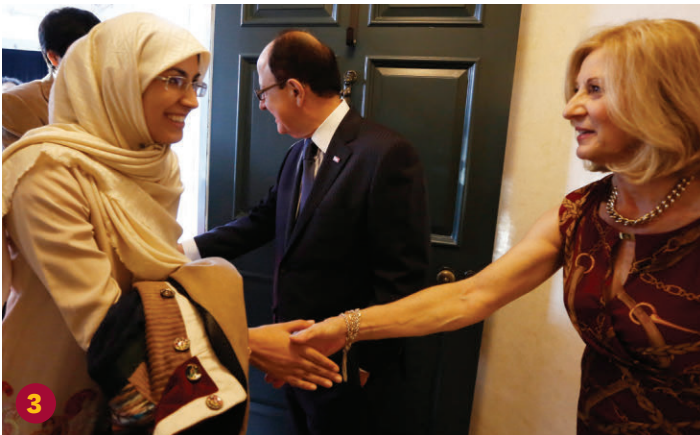
A USC women’s rugby player and soprano in USC’s Saved By Grace Gospel Choir, Brady said she’s grateful to have had the opportunity to share Thanksgiving with the Nikias family

every year since she arrived at USC.

“It’s really expensive to fly home,” she said. “So it’s really great that USC does this for the students who can’t go home for the holiday.”

The tradition also exemplifies what it means to be part of the Trojan Family for Spanyi and many others.

“Being part of the Trojan Family means being part of a community where people care about you and your well-being, and wherever you go in the world, you will have people to reach out to and people who care about you, for the rest of your life,” Spanyi said. “It is something I will never take for granted.”



1. Lilla Spanyi, left, and Precious Nwaoha share a Thanksgiving Day hug before heading to the USC president’s house for a special holiday dinner.

2. & 3. President Nikias and First Lady Niki C. Nikias greeting USC students LooLoo Amante (2) and Marzieh Vaeztourshizi (3).

4. USC students enjoying their traditional Thanksgiving meal with the chairman of the USC Board of Trustees, John Mork, and his wife, Julie.

5. Lilla Spanyi, C. L. Max Nikias and Alexis Brady display the traditional USC Thanksgiving salute.

Photo 1 by Michael Owen Baker, photos 2-5 by Steve Cohn

