**President's Message:**

Dear Town and Gown of USC,

We wanted to thank you all, once again, for your generous support for our **2021 Inspiring Hearts and Minds Benefit** honoring Ruberta Weaver. Please enjoy the photos taken by Deidre Davidson at Ruberta's home the day of the Benefit.

And, please mark your calendars for our 2022 Benefit to be held on April 5, 2022 at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

And, finally, we will look forward to being together at the USC HOTEL BALLROOM for our October, November, and December general meetings and luncheons. We will plan to live stream our speakers these months, as well.

Thank you to each and every one of you for supporting our 501(c)(3). 117 years and going strong!

Thank you for your loyalty to Town and Gown of USC and for caring about our mission.

Sincerely,

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**It’s dues renewal time for our philanthropy!**
Visit [www.townandgownofusc.org](http://www.townandgownofusc.org) to renew today!

Congratulations and welcome to our newest Town and Gown of USC members who were approved at our April board meeting! We look forward to meeting these accomplished women:

**Brittani Brisacher: (Avalon)**
Brittani continues the legacy of entrepreneurship in her family. They have owned and operated businesses on Catalina Island for four generations, including the Edgewater Hotel and California Eats food delivery service. She holds an MBA from USC and her company is involved in marketing, consulting, and graphic arts. Brittani is involved in Pi Beta Phi philanthropy work, DAR and is a Board Trustee for the Catalina Island Museum.

**Stephanie Estrada: (Fontana)**
Stephanie earned her Communications and Psychology degrees from USC. She has experience with organizational management, financial analysis, event planning and interior design. She has worked as a financial planner for New York Life, an insurance underwriter for State Farm as well as been involved in the USC Alumni Entrepreneurs Network. Stephanie has also volunteered in the Palmdale Foster Care Group and hosted foreign exchange students.

Kathie Johnson and Virginia Naeve
VPs, Membership
May General Meeting and Program Notes

Thank you for joining us at our exciting and informative May General Meeting and Zoom Speaker Series. We were pleased to install our Newly Elected and Appointed Board of Directors; honor Life Members; hear from the exceptional Town & Gown scholar, Julianna Montano, a sophomore, double majoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Law and Pharmacology & Drug Development; and watch two incredibly stimulating keynote speakers who spoke about The Changing Political Landscape:

**Robert “Bob” Shrum:** Director, USC Dornsife Center for the Political Future, Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics

&

**Michael Murphy:** Co-Director, USC Dornsife Center for the Political Future

These longtime political strategists lead the Center devoted to bipartisan explorations of the biggest issues facing our country and community. Learn more about the USC Dornsife, Center for the Political Future by subscribing to their newsletter, [click here](#).

A recording of this program is available on the Town & Gown of USC website, or [click here](#).

Congratulations to our opportunity drawing winners:
- Marra Boada – fabulous “Americana” themed Gift Basket, donated by Kathleen Campos
- Elaine Rosen- beautiful Timree pillow and a $250 American Express Gift Card

We also enjoyed a message from our wonderful President, Hilary Crahan, “*Thank you all. It has been, and continues to be, a privilege to volunteer with you. Fight On!*”

Thank you for joining us for our virtual meetings this year. We appreciate your valued support of Town and Gown of USC and we look forward to seeing you in person from the USC Hotel on October 5, 2021!

**Patti Jamgotchian and Colleen Stroyke**
Town & Gown of USC, Vice Presidents, Programs
programs@townandgownofusc.org
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Town and Gown of USC 2021-2022

Past Presidents- The President’s Circle
All Past Presidents are invited to Board of Directors meetings as special guests.

Jane Bensussen  Carol Fox  Judith Pohlmann
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Jo Ann Conley  Carol Mollett  Ruberta Weaver
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Town and Gown of USC 2021-2022

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- Kathryn Fukuda Amooi
- Len & Karen Atkins
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- Mary Cologne
- Patricia Dileva
- Candy Duncan
- Jacquelyn Dylla
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Flowers $175
Barbara Dohrmann
Angelina Grigorian
Betty Jamgotchian
Gina Kirkpatrick
Leida Neidecker
Rosie Sapia
Lisa Up de Graff

Photography $275
Sandy Johnston
Elaine Rosen

Stamps $300
Ann Palmer
Mary Pallares

Commemorative Program Book for Honoree $500
Rosemary Humphrey

Zoom Benefit Technology Costs $750
Ruberta Weaver

Honoree Luncheon for Ruberta and her family - $1,000
Hana Bui
Rhona Gewelber
Christine Marie Ofiesh
Charla Hindley Tindall

“The Spirit of Troy”
USC Trojan Marching Band - $1,500
Michele Engmann
Hali Gewelber Lieb
Niki and Max Nikias

Trojan Men (a cappella singing group) - $2,000
Sandy Johnston

Invitations - $3,500 (donations of $500)
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Deb Bradley
Chris Gregg
Christine Ofiesh
Barbara Orechoff

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USC Trojan Marching Band
Trojan Guild of Los Angeles
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Thank you for your generosity.
All donations received by 3-17-2021 are listed. For those received after our printing deadline, we sincerely thank you as well.
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Rita Konopasky  
USC School of Cinematic Arts  
BA Film & Television Production

What is exciting and interesting, or currently challenging you, in your major field of study?  
When the pandemic first closed shut down all classes in March 2020, we were all faced with the challenge of thinking creatively in non-conventional ways. Because filmmaking is so collaborative and hands-on, we had to begin to think of innovative ways to make new content.

I was the Production Designer on our senior thesis film, “Rainy Days,” in the fall of 2020. Because of COVID-19, I had to set up the production design all remotely, from my bedroom on zoom. The rest of the production crew lived together, so they were able to film in person, which was such a blessing! I ordered all of the set décor, props, wardrobe, etc online and had it shipped directly to the filming location. My friend who directed the film, Sofia Elena Alekna, would Zoom with me as she set up all of the production design. During filming, I was on the Zoom camera all day, and before they filmed each shot, they would show me the set to approve the production design. Even though I had to do it all remotely, it still felt like I was there on set with them!

Overall, we were all faced with challenges to be more creative, even amidst the pandemic.

Graduating and trying to enter the film industry after COVID-19 is daunting, but I do believe that now, more than ever, the world needs new stories. New stories can bring hope during this time. My production cohort have all grown closer during the pandemic and we are all excited to continue to work together as we enter the next stage of life together!

Describe clubs or other on campus activities in which you participate.  
For the past 4 years, I’ve been a part of CRU, a Christian ministry club on campus at USC! This club has profoundly impacted my life. I would not be who I am today without the friends and mentors I have met in this club. Before COVID-19, we met weekly for “mid-week” events on Wednesday nights. At mid-week, a pastor would come to speak to us, and a few students would play worship music. It was not only a wonderful break in the middle of my week, but it allowed me to form profoundly impactful friendships. Many of the students I met during mid-week events my freshman year are still my best friends today, and I know they will remain in my life forever. During COVID-19, we met weekly through a bible study and still do! My bible study encourages me, inspires me, challenges me, and grows me in beautiful ways, especially during the pandemic. It has truly strengthened my faith in so many ways. I am incredibly grateful to have this club in my life!

Describe any work (paid or volunteer) or off campus associations in which you participate.  
Before COVID-19, I volunteered at "No Walls" church on Friday nights on Skid Row. I made a documentary about the church back in 2018 for one of my SCA classes. The church is for those who live on Skid Row. Every time I go to the service, I am deeply humbled and moved by the congregation’s faith and the joy that they find. Even though they own little, they have so much joy and love to give.
List and describe any internships you've had this past year.
For the past three years, I have been working for my incredible boss, Lisa Fox, who runs the First Jobs program at SCA’s Industry Relations office. Working for Lisa has been such a wonderful, enriching experience! First Jobs connects USC alumni to employers in the entertainment industry. I assist Lisa by doing administrative tasks such as tracking and logging job submissions, helping out with employer outreach, and organizing and planning events for the program. Due to COVID-19, many of the candidates in the program were furloughed or lost their jobs, so we had to help them find new work, even if it was temporary or a small freelance, remote editing/writing job. It has been encouraging, as a student, to learn some behind the scenes of the industry. I've seen how the program has adapted throughout the pandemic and am extremely inspired by how the industry continues to preserve to tell new stories and to help each other!

List any new information we should know about your current status, your involvement at USC, or your future plans.
After graduation, I plan on working with my brother, Luke, who graduated from USC SCA in May 2020, on a new independent film this summer. After that, I will begin applying for new job positions! My end goal is to write and direct feature films with Luke. We want to make character-based dramas that explore the complexities of the human condition.

During this last semester, I took a poetry class that profoundly impacted me. It not only allowed me to become more self-aware, but it inspired and increased my love for cinema. Many of the poems I wrote and were drawn to read like screenplays. I realized that cinema is a form of poetry, and poetry is a form of cinema. They are incredibly similar and are both types of art that can profoundly impact and touch others. Luke and I are looking forward to implementing more poetry within our films.

Overall, this past year has been extremely eye-opening, draining, encouraging, humbling, rewarding, joyful, challenging, but mostly- it’s been good. It’s brought me to my knees in prayer, and it’s brought me to mountain tops in worship. It’s strengthened my friendships and allowed me to learn about the power of vulnerability and love during the midst of challenging times. It’s taught me more about the power of joy than any other season in my life.

The pandemic has taught me how important and valuable the little moments in life are. After moving to all remote classes, I realized that what was so special about being on campus was in the little things, not necessarily the huge ones. For instance: the sound of the fountain at SCA, the awkward small talk in the elevator with strangers, the line at Coffee Bean during class breaks, the bike lane on Trousdale, asking a stranger if they are okay when they fell off their skateboard, staying after class to speak with your professor and classmates about movies. All of these little things have truly shaped my heart and who I have become. It was within the little interactions that I experienced the most joy throughout the day. Moving forward, years in the future, I know I won’t be able to recall all of the emotions or experiences I have had these past four years. But I know I will clearly remember how God has used these little moments to soften my heart and that I would not be who I am today without these moments that I hold so close.

Overall, I am very excited to graduate! Two months ago, I would have said I was a bit anxious. After some reflection time, I began to seeing graduation just as “the next thing.” And “the next thing” has never been that scary. It’s just the next thing, and that is something to look forward to! One of my best friends told me that the opposite of fear isn’t not to fear- but to be excited. I am learning how to be excited about the next thing. God has always been there for me in the next thing, so I know he will be in this one too. USC has blessed me with incredible experiences, mentors, knowledge, wisdom, and friendships. I have learned so much from the wonderful people I have met, worked with, and grown with. What a treasure this experience has been. I am going to miss USC deeply. And I’m excited for “the next thing.”

Click the link below to see some of Rita’s work: https://vimeo.com/500194768
Password: 480Rainy
IN MEMORIAM

Anne Douglas
2003 Benefit Honoree
Benefit proceeds established the
Anne and Kirk Douglas Town and Gown Scholarship

Mary Rooney
Life Member of Town and Gown of USC
Established the
Mary Green Rooney Town and Gown Endowed Scholarship Fund

DID YOU KNOW...

In 1982-84, the Town and Gown Scholarship Endowment Fund grew substantially, and the number of scholarships grew from 84-134 during Marjorie Zickfeld’s tenure. With the help of Carl Franklin, Town and Gown was officially incorporated in California as a non-profit corporation, with tax-exempt status. As Carolyn Franklin once said to Sally Edwards, “We keep our lunches and benefit price low, we are here to promote the camaraderie of Town and Gown in hopes that people will create scholarships.”

Physical Facilities Co-Chairs
D’Arcy McLeod
Marilou Hamill

2021 ANNUAL BENEFIT PHOTOS

Carl M. Franklin and his late wife, Carolyn Craig Franklin, in 1985.
SAVE THE DATE

April 5, 2022
Town and Gown of USC Annual Benefit
The Beverly Hills Hotel

Questions?
Please feel free to contact
2022 Benefit Chair, Edic Etmekjian
edicetmekjian@gmail.com

Do you have any news to share with Town and Gown? Please email Kari May, karidmay@gmail.com.

Town and Gown of the University of Southern California is a nonprofit philanthropic organization whose purpose is to support USC through scholarships for students, building and campus enhancements, and cultural programs.

• Please remember to share your pictures on Facebook and follow us on Instagram. •