By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

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She spikes volleyballs, speaks Portuguese and dances Zumba like a boss.

These are just some of the talents that Thayná Silva, a 19 year-old international student from Susano, Brazil, and sophomore at Seward County Community College, possesses.

Silva, an avid volleyball player for SCCC, will be back for another round next year.

“Yes, but I’m a red shirt. I will be back next year,” she explained.

Silva noted she came to America to play volleyball with the help of a scholarship.

“To play, and I won a scholarship. In Brazil, it’s really hard to have the opportunity there, so when I had the opportunity, I didn’t think two times. I just come.”

Silva has been playing volleyball since she was very little.

“I started when I was 10 years old,” she said.

Besides playing volleyball, Silva is majoring in business and she added she loves the college environment.

“I love everything. It’s very different from Brazil. It’s like when you walk in the streets and you see a lot of people – when I come here the first time, I thought it was weird because in Brazil – we say ‘hi,’ hugging here – sometimes the people just walking don’t say ‘hi,’” she said.

Silva emphasized the opportunity of studying in America. She is indulging in everything college life offers.

“Everything here is amazing, like for sports and studying, everything is really good, especially for me because English is my second language. Until you learn English here it’s great.

“We don’t have college in Brazil. You go to a university already, but it’s really hard to get scholarships there. It’s really hard.”

She also noted that there is more diversity here. For example, she said, there are even people

from Argentina here.

When it comes to holidays, Thanksgiving or “Accion de Gracias” is not necessarily celebrated, she said.

“We have Thanksgiving, but it’s just one day. We don’t have a big celebration.”

Silva said that she spent this year’s Thanksgiving with her roommate and her roommate’s family for the entire weekend and “it was great.” She said she also ate turkey for the first time.

“We don’t celebrate Accion de Gracias, like the families come over to our house but we don’t have specially. Just some times.

“It’s reversed because we don’t have Thanksgiving and you guys have Christmas and New Year. Christmas and New Year, we have a big one.

“We have Carnival. It’s February every year. It starts on Wednesday and finishes next Wednesday. It’s just one week. All weekend,” Silva said.

And that is where everybody dances “Samba” or Zumba in English.

“Yeah, I love Samba. We danced this year and last year, too. I don’t know how to explain it,” she said and laughed. “It’s funny. I was excited to do it for Patsy (Fischer), for everybody.”

Silva will also celebrate Christmas in the United States for the first time too.

She will spend Christmas with her host family and t'ai chi and Yoga Instructor Lydia Augustine.

Silva said she misses Brazil but she is not worried because she has friends, like Augustine and Greg Leung.

"My family, everyone comes to my grandma's house and the table has a lot of foods. We have fruit, dessert, wine, champagne," she said. "We spend all day together."

For New Year's, Silva said she stays with family until 12 a.m., and then there is walking the streets, and after midnight, she and friends go watch the fireworks. When it is 8 or 9 a.m., we go back home.

"I really love it."

Besides playing volleyball, Silva also enjoys playing soccer and hanging out with friends.

"I like everybody. We don't have this in Brazil. It's great to stay in dorms with everybody," she said.

As for future plans, she hopes transfer somewhere where it's warm.

"Florida, California – Here it's really cold. We don't have really cold like this in Brazil," Silva said.