

# Cruise Industry News

## Chona Holland is Giving Back

**N**ot every major food wholesaler's CEO steers her company away from land-based restaurants to concentrate on supplying cruise lines, or sings and dances for charities, or studies kickboxing and ballroom dancing. But those are just the recent developments in the twisting story of U.S. Food Products executive Chona Holland.

Born on the resort-studded island of Visayas, Philippines, Holland was the 13<sup>th</sup> child in a family home without electricity or running water. After the death of her parents, Holland somehow managed to achieve a college degree in banking and international transactions. At 27, she packed her meager possessions and moved to New York City. The degree helped her find work with an international insurance company on Wall Street and she was quickly promoted to supervisor. Five years after coming to America, she was injured in the 1993 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

### Growing Business and Responsibility

Holland moved to New Jersey and met her future husband and business partner Edward Holland, a food supply entrepreneur.

She took over bookkeeping and operations for U.S. Food Products and eventually became chief stockholder and CEO. The company supplies all manner of food stuffs for cruise lines in North America, Asia and Europe.

"Anything the customer wants," Holland said. "The volume is there. It's less work and less expensive (than supplying to individual restaurants)."

As the business grew, so did Holland's humanitarian efforts.

She began organizing talent pageants to benefit charitable causes in North America and Asia as a way to give back to those less fortunate. Holland participates in the contests as well, winning five



events – including the grand prize – in the Mrs. Hearts and Hopes of the Philippines Pageant in June. She used the cash prize to buy food supplies for needy people in the islands.

"I come from the Philippines. It's a Third World country," Holland said. "I know how it is."

### All for Charity

With the Philippine/American Association, she helped organize the Ms. Teen Philippines USA competition, which donates proceeds to charity, and recently facilitated towel and blanket donations from New York-area hotels to victims of recent storms in Asia.

"I have that love and passion for it," Holland said. "I grew up singing." She also urges cruise lines to donate used linens to humanitarian causes.

"If there is any excess at all. It's tax deductible," she said. "Anything, big or small, would be greatly appreciated."

Holland said she's also met with government officials in the Philippines who are eager to attract cruise business.

**Chona Holland, CEO and chief stockholder of U.S. Food Products, with husband and business partner Edward Holland, after winning the Celebrate Hearts and Hopes Beauty Pageant**

"I would say it is the next place to travel for the cruise lines. It's very interesting," Holland said. "You can go so far with your dollars in Asia."

Each successful business move allows her to help one more person injured by a typhoon or mired in poverty. Although her injured back still hurts from the World Trade Center attack, Holland said nothing can keep her down.

"I'm doing as much as I can. I don't let anything stop me." – *Mat Probasco*

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