

# What's the 2008 holiday season's must-have gift? Cash!

Survey reveals nearly two-thirds are hoping for green holidays!

ENGLEWOOD, CO—Two surveys conducted by Western Union show that consumers are reconsidering their holiday wish lists this season. Now even more than in the first survey conducted eight weeks prior, consumers are saying that cash is by far the gift of choice and the more practical option this holiday season. Survey results show:

- Sixty-five (65) percent of Americans would prefer to receive \$100 in cash, rather than a specific present or a gift card of the same value, up nine points from a Western Union survey fielded between September 12 and 14;

- Of that 65 percent, more than half (53 percent) would use that money on basic living expenses such as gas, groceries and bills. Only 14 percent would spend it on a treat for themselves; and

- Seventy-nine (79) percent of Americans believe cash is a good gift because people can use it to get what they really want.

"The whirlwind economy has everyone taking stock of their finances, especially now that we are heading into the holiday season," said Stewart A. Stockdale, executive vice president and president, US and Canada, Western Union. "People view cash gifts as a way to control spending and stay within their budgets, while providing loved ones with a financial boost. Either way, cash is clearly this year's 'must have' gift," Stockdale added.

"What's particularly interesting about the data is the difference

in responses from when we first fielded this survey just eight weeks ago," Stockdale continued. "At that point, before the economic crisis hit, 56 percent of consumers wanted to receive cash gifts. Two months later that has increased by nine percentage points. Similarly, in September, 27 percent of respondents would have used a cash gift for a personal splurge. That figure has since dropped 13 percentage points.

"Also, there has been a dramatic drop in the number of respondents who plan to give gift cards for services such as a manicure or a pre-paid phone card. Two months ago that figure was 40 percent, but now the number is 30 percent. All of this tells me that, in these economic times, for the holidays, frivolity is out and practicality is in," Stockdale continued.

The survey also revealed that those with household incomes of less than \$50,000 are more likely to give cash than those with higher incomes. Nearly two thirds said in the past they had spent more on gifts than planned. Thus sending cash may be easier for them to manage their spending. The survey revealed:

- Sixty-two (62) percent of those with household incomes of less than \$50,000 are likely to give cash;

- Fifty-three (53) percent of those with more than \$50,000 in household income are likely to give cash; and

- Sixty-five (65) percent of

Americans said they often end up spending more on gifts than they had planned to spend.

"Since many Americans (59 percent) say they will be sending gifts to people they won't see in person this holiday season, the gift of cash via a money transfer with Western Union can be the ideal way to give your loved ones exactly what they're really hoping for," Stockdale added.

To further enhance consumers' gift giving experiences during the holidays, Western Union is featuring online community areas in which consumers can share gift stories relevant to each of the major holidays, and can send free e-cards to connect with family and friends.

Western Union provides three simple options for sending the gift of cash: by visiting any of the more than 320,000 Western Union Agent locations worldwide; calling 1-800-CALL-CASH; or logging onto westernunion.com.

Western Union has partnered with Filipina YouTube sensation Happy Slip, Christine Gambito, to reach out to Filipino consumers. The partnership is a five video series incorporating a Western Union Money transfer. Her YouTube videos consistently rank high among most viewed and skews particularly high among Filipino and Filipino American viewers. To see her videos, please visit YouTube and search key words: Happy Slip *Fragile* or Happy Slip *More Processed Meat*.

(Advertising Supplement)

## Reward yourself with sweet deals from DIRECTV

America's leading satellite company to offer an exciting new Filipino programming package and a chance to win fabulous prizes

EL SEGUNDO, CA—With the excitement of the upcoming holidays that are quickly approaching, DIRECTV, the nation's leading satellite company, has prepared a delightfully sweet deal for Filipino customers. DIRECTV is offering a PinoyDirect, a new Filipino package that includes top Filipino channels: TFC, GMA Pinoy, and MYX, plus access to over 110 great channels for a low price of \$39.98 per month.

With a stellar reputation and the highest customer satisfaction in the market, DIRECTV's Filipino customers will not only enjoy the best HD content available, they will also have access to the best entertainment quality and value

in the new PinoyDirect Filipino programming package.

"In addition to our top-notch content and local programming, at DIRECTV, we are committed to providing quality Filipino entertainment packages at an affordable price for our customers to enjoy," states John de Armas, Vice President of WorldDirect. "Great programming courtesy of your friends at DIRECTV and the chance to win some pretty cool prizes; it's definitely a sweet deal.

To sign up for DIRECTV service or for additional information, customers should call DIRECTV authorized dealers or DIRECTV at 800-566-4388.

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# LEADERS' DIGEST

Filipinos are everywhere in America—from the East to the West coast. However, as the second largest Asian American community in America, we still have to empower ourselves to become more visible in the political mainstream. Unknown to us, fellow FilAms are making a difference across the US—as appointed and elected leaders in their respective areas. The Asian Journal Leaders' Digest aims to present to readers these leaders who have made—and continually making a difference for the Filipino American community.

## Prosy Abarquez-de la Cruz A (Formidable) Inertia in Motion

by NICKEE DE LEON  
AJP/Press



AN engaging conversation with Prosy de la Cruz last week opened up a Pandora's box (sans the negative connotation) of ideas and ideals. The one-on-one interview made this writer blurt the obvious—that Prosy is indeed, a woman who's in constant motion, unstoppable and unrelenting in enacting her philosophies in life.

A graduate of the University of the Philippines with a BS Degree in Food Technology, Prosy was the quintessential activist against martial law during the Marcos regime. She was a tireless advocate for democracy and a member of Makibaka, a women's organization in the Philippines—a fact that prompted her parents to bring her to America in the hopes that she would channel her energies less invasively. But the move made her even more fastidious and painstaking, both in her professional and personal endeavors. And while in the United States, she became an active member of the National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines, and later a founding member and a regional officer for the Alliance for Philippine Concerns in Los Angeles.

During her immigrant life-years in the United States, Prosy's first essay appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*. Prosy also started writing for the Food and Drug Cosmetic Division Newsletter published by Quality Press. "The American Society for Quality is an international group of over 100,000 quality professionals in various industries in manufacturing: pharmaceuticals, software, cosmetics, food, automotive, education, healthcare, government, including retail. They pioneer a lot of the quality trends in the United States," she said.

Feisty and always brimming with groundbreaking ideas, Prosy convinced her colleagues in the society to participate in electoral matters in a strategic planning

during the tumultuous years of the first Bush administration. She reiterated that "they were the initiators of quality projects in the United States...so why not get involved with electoral reform?" After that, the organization communicated frequently with the White House and are now at the forefront, lobbying for healthcare issues like 90,000 Americans who die of prescription errors each year.

She got through to them because of her job as a food and drug administrator for the California Department of Public Health. She was the first Filipina to be appointed in 1992, along with two Caucasian colleagues. Prosy was in charge of the Southern California region, armed only with a handful of people and very limited resources. She asserted herself despite the challenges, which, in her mind, became an opportunity for change instead of a hurdle.

She started working with an organization called Food Industry Business Roundtable (FIBR). She shared her vision—"that the government should be the leader of change in the industry." She suggested that small manufacturers undergo a training called the House of Safety and Quality. "Let's help them build a house for food safety and quality," Prosy added.

"Some of the firms that we trained, we asked them to bring us a team of three." Prosy asserted that in order for an organization to see change, you have to have a team of three people to seed it and nurture it. Dramatic improvements ensued for companies who participated in the training. "It's 9 full Saturdays. The first session had 18 instructors from various fields—government, academe, industry and quality professionals.

Different perspectives and a well-rounded group from various professions brought more clarity. Everyone realized the essence of the bigger picture in food manu-

facturing and quality management systems.

"The owners started partnering with their employees. It became (in the words of President-elect Obama), a 'we' instead of an 'us' and 'them,'" Prosy quipped.

In January 2004, after working for 27 years, Prosy retired from the California Department of Public Health. She was appointed soon after by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa as Civil Service Commissioner in August 2005.

"I worked to hear the complaints, grievances, discharges, firings, etc. It was a very taxing volunteer job. We had meetings every two weeks," she confessed.

In 2007, Prosy became the commissioner for the LA City Convention Center. Her job was to make decisions on bonds issuance for the improvement and expansion of the Convention Center. The Center is innovative in "greening their operational practices" in terms of wastewater management, storage of water for air conditioning, use of biodegradable materials, to name a few. Because Prosy became active in the Obama campaign, she decided to resign from her position a few months ago for ethical reasons.

Prosy is currently a contributor for the *Asian Journal*. She is proud to say that she has been enlightened about her capabilities and that she writes from the heart and without fear. Prosy is also actively involved in community-building activities and works for the Filipino-American Library. She became board president and is one of the founders of the Spirit Awards (which started in 2001). Prosy is also an advocate for the UCLA Filipino Legacy Fund. ■

## People and Events

### Lucky Chances thanks community anew



LUCKY Chances Casino in Colma, California, the first and only 100 percent Filipino-owned gaming establishment in the United States, once again lives up to its time-honored tradition of hosting a Thanksgiving dinner for its patrons, the township of Colma, and the public at large. Held this year on Tuesday, Nov. 25, the annual event gives Lucky Chances the opportunity to thank the general public, especially its customers—particularly the residents of Colma—for their continued patronage of the gaming and dining facilities in the complex. Brothers

Rommel and Ruell Medina, Lucky Chances owners and operators, have maintained this community tradition started by their father, philanthropist Rene Medina, since he founded the casino in 1998. Yearly, too, the Medina brothers host a free-to-the-public dinner in February to celebrate Chinese New Year, as well as in June in observance of Lucky Chances anniversary. Photo shows Edward Lee (right, partly hidden), food and beverage manager, and staff during a lull in the continuous stream of people from all over the Bay Area that evening. ■

### SPI Batch '68 Class Reunion

THE Class of 1968, Boys and Girls Departments, of Saint Pascual Institute in Obando, Bulacan will celebrate their 40th class reunion on January 25, 2009. The celebration will be held at the Paradise Resort in Malolos, Bulacan from 8 am to 9 pm. Members of this Batch '68 who are now residing in Canada and the United States and other parts of the world are invited to share this special day with their fellow 1968 graduates in the Philippines.

For more information regarding this celebration, please contact the following Batch '68 members: Thelma Daez-Sy at (707) 310-3633/(707) 52-0655; Noemi Punzal at (312) 590-0459/(313) 461-0459; Phenny & Rolly Rivera at (610) 500-1141/(610) 558-2951 or Jun de Guzman at raydjqr@yahoo.com. ■

### Free Foreclosure Prevention Clinic in Solano County to help hundreds of homeowners

VALLEJO, CA—Mabuhay Alliance, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization, is providing a free Foreclosure Prevention Clinic to be held on Saturday, December 13, at the Solano Community College, Vallejo Center (located at 545 Columbus Parkway, Vallejo, CA 94591), from 12 pm to 5 pm. The clinic is in line with Mabuhay Alliance's advocacy of foreclosure intervention and helping homeowners stay in their homes.

Mabuhay Alliance, a HUD Approved Housing Counseling agency, will be providing volunteer housing counselors, mortgage counselors, and attorneys to answer to homeowners who are facing the difficult task of resolving a mortgage delinquency. Representatives from lenders such as JP Morgan Chase, Washington Mutual, Bank of America, Countrywide, Wells Fargo, Citi, HSBC, EMC, IndyMac, Downey Savings and other lending servicers will be present to meet with their mortgage clients, face-to-face, to start the process on resolving their delinquency. While at the clinic, homeowners will also be able to hear several speakers on topics ranging from bankruptcy to the foreclosure process. Registration is free. You can pre-register online at [www.mabuhayalliance.org/foreclosure](http://www.mabuhayalliance.org/foreclosure).

Chase Home Lending CEO, David Lowman, recently disclosed to Mabuhay Alliance that Chase, which recently acquired Washington Mutual, will not put any additional loans that it owns into the foreclosure process while it implements loan modification enhancement that may take up to 90 days. They also announced its intention to establish a foreclosure intervention center in Solano County to address foreclosure issues of homeowners in the county and nearby areas.

The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), the biggest umbrella of Filipino American Associations in the continental United States, and United Way of California are collaborating with Mabuhay Alliance. Greg Macabenta, National Chair of NaFFAA, and publisher of the leading Filipino American newspaper Ang Panahon, has mobilized its membership in the region to generate public awareness on this opportunity for people to speak to their mortgage lenders directly. ■

### Simbang Gabi (9-day Advent Mass), Dec. 16-24

ST. Joan of Arc's Filipino Community in San Ramon, CA invites you to *Simbang Gabi (Misa de Gallo)* at St. Joan of Arc Parish, on Dec. 16-23 at 7 pm, and Dec. 24 at 5 am, 2601 San Ramon Valley Blvd, San Ramon, CA 94583.

All masses are in English. Fellowship and refreshments follow after mass in the multipurpose room. For more info, visit [www.sjars.org](http://www.sjars.org) or contact Marietta Ocampo (925)525-6281, [mocampo@kw.com](mailto:mocampo@kw.com). ■

### Handel's 'Sing It Yourself Messiah' features Fil-Am Mezzo-Soprano

THE San Francisco Sinfonietta presents its 30th year performance of Handel's *Sing It Yourself Messiah* at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco on Sunday, December 14.

The exuberant performance of this beloved San Francisco holiday tradition will come alive with Maestro Urs Leonhardt Steiner conducting the San Francisco Sinfonietta Orchestra with the participation of the Chorus and the audience. The performance will also showcase the featured soloists: a tenor, a bass-baritone, two sopranos and a Fil-Am mezzo-soprano, Kristine Sinajon.

The soloists were chosen through a public competition last October 2007. Kristine was picked to perform the mezzo-soprano part in the December 2007 performance, and Conductor Urs decided to have her back for this year's performance at Davies Symphony Hall.

Praised for her vocal warmth and beauty, Kristine is in high demand in San Francisco. Last October, she played the role of *Didang* in a contemporary kundiman cycle, *Lalawigan*, commissioned by the San Francisco Arts Commission and composed by critically-acclaimed classical guitarist Florante Aguilar. Kristine dazzled the audience with her beautiful rendition of the kundiman songs and her convincing portrayal of the insane character *Didang* along side award-winning Philippine actor Raymond Bagatsing and Kyle de Ocera.

Kristine is also highly active in the Archdiocese of San Francisco as a professional cantor and as Director of Music at St. Brendan Church.

She will be the cantor at the Commissioning of the Simbang Gabi at St. Mary's Cathedral on December 13. This Commissioning Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop George Niederauer and is the "first such celebration in the Archdiocese of San Francisco." "Filipino-American Catholics in the San Francisco area are planning their most expansive *Simbang Gabi* novena ever as participants go forth to their parishes to make the Christmas tradition an Archdiocese-wide event." ■



San Nicoleno Ilocos Norte Philippines of California's Annual dinner and dance was held in Foster City last November 8. In photo are (L-R) Rey Reyes, President of Luzon Visayas Mindanao (LuzVMin) Association of California, Cher Honor Godoy Knight, Miss San Nicoleno of California 2007, Mrs. Marina Tolentino, Mrs. San Nicoleno of California 2008 (to be crowned during the town fiesta on December 25 to 31, 2008), and Vic Barba, Chief Security of LuzVMin.