

# Spotlight NEW

PHILANTHROPY IN THE BIG APPLE

By Lifestyle Expert Doni T. Luckutt

## Entertainment Powerhouse Lucia Kaiser

Talking to entertainment legend **Lucia Kaiser** is like getting whipped up in the energy of a snowstorm, tornado and tsunami all at once – without the danger of course. After spending just a few minutes with this powerhouse, her meteoric rise from gopher at the **Johnny Carson Show** to the show's first woman executive producer is quite understandable. Her influence, however, is immeasurable.

Credentials like Kaiser's don't come easily and stories like hers are a rarity in today's world. Moving quickly from that "gopher" position at age 18, Kaiser soon was promoted to Carson's talent coordinator and publicist for four years at **The Tonight Show** when it was filmed in New York City. She went on to make many other "first" achievements in her career: First woman in management for Johnny Carson, first (and only) woman to run martial arts legend Bruce Lee's production company in Hong Kong, co-founder of the first all-woman advertising agency in New York City and the first woman General Manger at Hawaii's KGU Radio.

Those achievements are highlights in Kaiser's unbelievable career. Her personal life is equally awe-inspiring, reading like a Cinderella story where the heroine hails from The Bronx and creates her own happily-ever-after even before being swept up by a knight from the Wilhelm Kaiser Family of Germany. Though Kaiser's fairy tale includes living in royal palaces, hob-knobbing with the world's most noble families, and extended stays in far-away places in Europe, Asia, Australia, South America, Africa and the South Pacific, she eventually returned to and has spent the last fourteen years in the city of her birth. "I think that if I had to live anywhere other than New York, it would be tough because I'm so in love with New York," she chuckled.



It figures, as the city provides a perfect backdrop for Kaiser's current chapter in her entertainment-industry saga. With client- and friend- lists reading like a who's who of socialites, business moguls and celebrities, she's put her business and entertainment acumen into creating financing for film, television



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projects and Broadway plays. "I will be producing a major feature film this year starring three A-list Actors once the funding is finalized," said Kaiser, who also is working to finalize a Broadway play with a cast of A-list actors.

Though she speaks of her well-known parties, thrown from a spacious Upper West Side apartment (in the Beaumont, a landmark building on Riverside Drive), and business dealings with entertainment industry titans, it's obvious that Kaiser's main love is giving back. Kaiser's philanthropic interests began well before her days in Hawaii, but she's most proud of the "**You Can Make a Difference**" radio show she co-created and hosted while living in the state. Broadcast to more than 70 stations across the U.S., the two-hour program made the difference to people in need, often before the sign-off at the end of each show. "During one show, a guy called in with a serious eye problem—it was a two hour show, by the end, , two surgeons called--he was cured with no money," she remembered. In another, "A woman with seven kids and beaten by her husband had nowhere to live. A wealthy couple in the city had a house on their property with 9 or 10 bedrooms and offered the house to the woman." She also produced an award-winning half hour documentary about 31 homeless families in Hawaii, garnering commendations by the sitting Hawaiian Governor, State Legislature and Honolulu Mayor and City Council. "Politically, we raised so much awareness," she said, clearly proud of the project's far-reaching impact.

Over the years, Kaiser has continued philanthropic efforts, including serving as keynote speaker at the **United Nations Youth Assembly** last fall. **The Assembly** is formally associated with the UN and focused on showing youth how one person can make a difference as an educated and active citizen. Kaiser headlined renowned speakers addressing more than fifteen hundred young leaders from around the world, inspiring youth to make a difference beginning with their local communities. She also supports New York based charities including those of friends socialite Denise Rich and singer Bette Midler (see sidebars).

Shining as a beacon of light in her community, her industry and with her friends, Kaiser is a native New Yorker whose influence spans the globe, but makes sure to bring it back home to the city she loves.