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David Hirsch, Crew Concierge



TAIMY ALVAREZ/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ken Schwebel, Crew Concierge manager, left, and Mason Noel, Inventory specialist, fill an order of toiletries and other sundry items for crew members on the Allure of the Seas cruise ship.

Pompano firm keeps cruise ship crews supplied

By ARLENE SATCHELL
Staff writer

David Hirsch knows what it's like not to have access to favorite snacks or to run out of everyday health care items while working at sea.

That dilemma led Hirsch, 43, and his wife Ashley to launch Crew Concierge in November 2005 to fill a void he'd found while working on cruise ships, after returning to life onshore.

"It's the everyday stuff we just kind of take for granted," said Hirsch at his Pompano Beach warehouse Friday, pointing to mouthwash, shaving cream and other products stocked on shelves.

Today, with five employees, the company services 40 ships across the globe, providing their crew centers or stores with more than 2,500 convenience, beauty and health care products sourced primarily from the U.S., Philippines, U.K., Scandinavia and the Caribbean.

When cruise ships are docked in South Florida ports, some crew members have to stay onboard to fulfill duties in case of an emergency, or to get rooms and restaurants ready for another cruise within a few hours, Hirsch said.

And trying to buy toiletry and sundry items at tourist ports of call is often two to three times more expensive, he noted.

Still, crew members with shore leave can sometimes find convenience stores in port or nearby to shop for supplies. At Port Everglades for example, the nonprofit Seafarers' House has a convenience and electronics store on-site that caters to them.

For ship employees unable to get ashore, an onboard convenience store near their quarters below the decks used by passengers is often a lifesaver.

"I wish there was this kind of service when I was on crew," said Hirsch, who's worked as a DJ and cruise director on Royal Caribbean International ships.

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