

Iwaki Spa Resort Hawaiians – Hula Girls from Fukushima cheering up Japan –



Hula Girls of Iwaki Spa Resort Hawaiians



Hula Girls National Kizuna Caravan



A pool of Iwaki Spa Resort Hawaiians

Spa Resort Hawaiians, a resort complex in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture, managed by Joban Kosan Co., started in 1966 as the Joban Hawaiian Center, which is a hot-spring resort, when once booming coal mines were declining there. The main

attraction of the resort was the Hawaiian dance team "Hula Girls", consisting of local residents, who went on a performance tour around the country in 1965 when the team was formed and 1966 to overcome a crisis that gripped the resort in its inaugural days.

The resort was hit hard by the Great East Japan Earthquake and had to be closed for a time. However, it resumed a part of its operations in October 2011 and, on February 8, 2012, the whole resort was back in business with a new facility added.

The Hula Girls are mostly from Iwaki City. While the resort was shut down following the earthquake, the Hula Girls went on a nationwide performance tour for the first time in 46 years. Called "Hula Girls National Kizuna Caravan," the girls began their tour with a comforting performance at an Iwaki City evacuation shelter on May 3, 2011, hoping to spread smiles and good spirits across the country. The Hula Girls held 247 performances in 124 places in 26 prefectures, including disaster-stricken areas in Fukushima Prefecture and other prefectures in north-eastern Japan as well as parts of Nagano Prefecture struck by a separate major earthquake. Among other performance places were shelters in and around Fukushima Prefecture and in the Tokyo metropolitan region, cities having parent-and-child and sister city relations with Iwaki, coal mine-related localities in Kyushu and Shikoku, and Kobe and Hiroshima, cities that have successfully recovered from disasters.

A documentary film, "Cheer up! Hula Girls – Living in Fukushima, their present situation –", directed by Masaki Kobayashi, was released last year. It depicts the Hula Girls and people working at the spa resort who, despite their own suffering from the disaster, always wore a smile on the stage, trying to encourage disaster victims in the wake of the caravan, and also depicts affected people making untiring efforts to live.