

# Hawaiian luau draws hundreds of guests

By Jodi Schneider McNamee  
Correspondent

When the original Polynesian explorers set out in small wooden canoes they had no idea of the varied cultures that would spring out of their efforts. They had no idea that thousands of years later, hundreds of people would gather at Sisters' Village Green to celebrate a traditional Hawaiian feast.

Last Thursday evening the aroma of Hawaiian flowers and cuisine filled the air as over 400 guests enjoyed an authentic meal with entertainment featuring traditional Polynesian dance and music presented by Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) and The Rotary Club of Sisters.

The Village Green was transformed into an Island paradise with traditional luau décor, including tiki torches.

"We are very excited about this event and have over a hundred more people than last year," said Liam Hughes, SPRD's executive director. "We expanded, then we sold out, and we had to turn away nearly 50 people today. Shannon even added more food at the end, enough for 425 guests."

Bi-Mart pharmacist Andy Mohler and his wife, Jenée — who wore Hawaiian attire, including a grass skirt — waited in line for tropical cuisine.

"This is the way you should dress when attending a luau," Jenée said smiling.

Scores of folks spread out on the Village Green lawn munching on their traditional luau meal of kalua pig, lomi lomi salmon, sticky rice, fresh pineapple, coconut cream cake, passion fruit juice and authentic Hawaiian coffee from the Aikane Plantation in Ka'u, Hawaii.

"There are a couple of new

things added to our lineup for tonight's luau," said Shannon Mokuahi Rackowski, SPRD's adult-program coordinator. "The lomi lomi salmon is one, and it's a secret recipe that my mother has made many times. Lomi lomi means 'to massage' and you massage the salmon with a special technique. Also a wonderful Hawaiian singer, Bill Keale from Bend, is performing."

Keale's first-cousin was the late singer, Israel "IZ" Kamakawiwo'ole whose rendition of "Somewhere over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World" still inspires many people. Keale grew up on the Island of Oahu with Kamakawiwo'ole, and lived in Hawaii for 30 years, where he discovered music and writing. Keale moved to Bend 25 years ago.

"I don't know how my popularity happened in Central Oregon, I just love playing music on my guitar and ukulele," Keale said.

There wasn't a dry eye in the park when Keale played "Somewhere Over The Rainbow/What A Wonderful World" as a tribute to his cousin while Rackowski hula-danced to the melody.

Kurt Silva also performed. This year Rackowski partnered up with Rosemary Miller's nonprofit Uhane Hula Group, Uhane meaning "spirit of Hawaii."

"This year we are doing a hula with Shannon. She came out to Bend and taught our group a special dance. We also have more students, including children," Miller said. "And of course the kids will be doing a poi ball dance; they have a lot of fun with that."

The poi, which is a light ball attached to a cord, is considered an extension of the dancer, and the sounds the balls create when hitting a surface can be used to mimic



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Hula dancers were featured in a highly successful Hawaiian Luau hosted by SPRD.

the rhythms of nature.

The ukulele has become such an essential part of Hawaiian culture that mere mention of the word conjures up images of the Islands.

Sisters Ukelele Group instructor Peggy Tehan, with over 20 students, including Will Werts, a SHS junior who crafted his own ukulele, performed a few Hawaiian tunes

to an enthusiastic crowd.

"It took me one trimester to build my ukulele in Woodworking II class," Werts said. "It was a rewarding process, but I have never played a ukulele before. I'm learning a little at a time, and I've practiced for tonight."

Chris Dalton, a Sisters resident since 1972, sat up front for a birds-eye view of

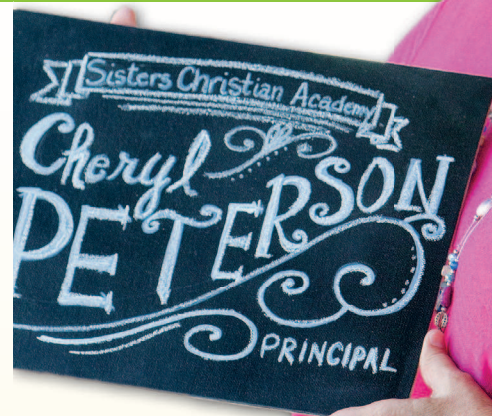
a Polynesian dance. Dalton is 102 years old and was born and raised on the Island of Kauai, Hawaii.

"I'm having a great time watching these performers come alive. I enjoyed my years growing up in Kauai," Dalton told *The Nugget*.

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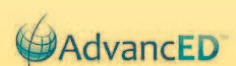
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