



Submitted photo

THE DANCERS OF Hula Mai bring the spirit of Hawaii to Sonoma.

Hula showcase planned on the Plaza

The exotic, tropical breezes of Hawaii will waft into Sonoma's Grinstead Amphitheater in the Plaza, courtesy of the Hula Mai show, on Friday, June 24, at 6:30 p.m.

Since Hula Mai began two years ago as an "occasional" hula workshop at Vintage House, it has evolved into a life style for many of its participants and a "retirement career" for its founder. Betty Ann Ka'ihilani Bruno had no idea what she was starting when she gave her first workshop in May 2009, and says she never expected it to grow into a full-time activity for her, her husband and several of the new best friends she has found in her classes. Hula Mai's more dedicated students call the hula their new passion, but Sonomans don't need to take hula lessons to enjoy Hawaii right here at home.

For the past year, Hula Mai has taken its "road show" to several local venues where audiences deck themselves out in flower leis and aloha shirts and, through the songs and dances of Hawaii, relive their honeymoons or vacations to the Islands.

"Everyone's invited," said Bruno, "It'll be our second show in the Grinstead, our way of giving aloha back to this wonderful community. Hula Mai's dancers are still relatively new dancers – backed by two years of instruction at the most, but I dare anybody to find more enthusiastic dancers. In Hula Mai, everyone dances right from the heart; you can see that on their faces, in their smiles and in their eyes. It's very beautiful and warms everybody."

Bruno added, "Hula Mai, with its music and culture of Hawaii, has changed the lives of several of the dancers. The dancers forge a relationship with the hula that puts them in touch with the Aloha spirit; I think many of them are surprised to discover that the hula is more than just another form of dance."

Nellie Woodard, a "non-dancer" before Hula Mai, practices every day and said, "I can lose myself in the hula; it has become a way of life for me because it speaks to the essence of life itself."

To learn more about Hula Mai, contact Vintage House at 996-0311.