

## **Aloha Initiative to Welcome First Group of Japan Disaster Survivors to Hawaii for Respite Care**

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(Honolulu, Hawaii, July 4, 2011) – While most Americans will be celebrating our nation's Independence Day, organizers for the Aloha Initiative will be welcoming to Hawaii its first group of sixty-eight Japanese citizens, coming to spend up to 90 days with island host families on Oahu and Maui for much needed respite care following the devastation of the March 11 Japan earthquake/tsunami.

A welcome ceremony was held at the Honolulu International Airport today to welcome this first group of Japanese survivors. They were presented with leis and gifts and greeted by Oahu host families before some of the group were escorted to Maui.

"When we started the Aloha Initiative to try to help these Japanese citizens who were devastated by the Japan disaster, we could not have imagined the tremendous outpouring of Aloha and support that we have received," said Aloha Initiative co-founder Lynn Araki-Regan. "We are very grateful to Maui County Mayor Alan Arakawa for his support, as well as our partners First Hawaiian Bank, Japan Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines, Relativity Media, and Mana Foods for stepping forward to make this dream of ours a reality. They truly embody the spirit of Aloha."

The Aloha Initiative is a program of the Japanese Cultural Society of Maui to provide citizens of Japan displaced by the March earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis with a temporary home in the islands. The Japan residents were selected based on greatest personal need and circumstance. Those chosen will spend up to 90 days with island host families on Oahu and Maui willing to take the displaced residents in and provide them with a warm, nurturing environment during their time of recovery.

Flight arrangements for the sixty-eight Japan residents traveling from Japan to Hawaii today were made by Japan Airlines. Both Japan Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines offered substantially discounted fares between Japan and Hawaii, while Hawaiian Airlines is also contributing free inter-island flights in support of the program. Monetary donations to the Aloha Initiative fund will be used for ground transportation, discounted airfare to and from Hawaii, as well as travelers insurance. To learn more about the Aloha Initiative, visit [www.alohainitiative.com](http://www.alohainitiative.com)

Here's how you can support the Aloha Initiative:

- Monetary donations are accepted at any First Hawaiian Bank branch in Hawaii,
- Guam and CNMI through July 15, 2011.
- On Maui, gently used clothing donations can be dropped off to:
  - Araki-Regan & Associates, 1823 Wells St. Suite 2A, Wailuku
  - Kahului Hongwanji Mission, 291 S. Puunene Ave., Kahului; or
  - Omochaya in Pukalani Terrace Center (please call 572-9833 beforehand)
- On Oahu, gently used clothing donation can be dropped off to:
- Hope Chapel West Oahu in the Waikele Shopping Center, 94-877 Lumiana
- Street Building 12, Waipahu. Donations will be received on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on the first Saturday of each month in July and August 9 a.m. to noon.

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