



MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter



January 9th of every year is the day of the Hatsuichi Festival. I was able to enjoy the festival's nighttime scenery for the first time, where I witnessed daruma dolls of all types and varieties being sold. The sight of many people crowding a booth selling kumade was especially memorable. I later learned what kumade is: a symbol of good fortune in itself but also decorated with many small lucky items. Additionally, I ate several salt and sauce-flavored beef skewers, a staple at many festivals in Japan. Since they are not readily sold in Hawaii or the mainland United States, I always make sure to get them.

As a fan of hot springs, I visited Kusatsu Onsen, a famous site in Gunma, and stayed at a place with a small semi-open-air bath. While washing up beforehand, the bath area was so cold that my entire body could not stop shivering. Actually entering the bath was another difficult ordeal; the water was the hottest I have ever experienced. I was eventually able to submerge myself after slowly pouring the water all over my skin, but I only stayed in the bath for less than five minutes. Although hot springs are known for their effectiveness in beautifying skin and lessening back pain, after my arms grew numb in mere minutes from the heat, I started to ponder about any potential negative health consequences instead.

