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## Optimists back charity for teens

CELESTE SMITH

The revitalized Ballantyne Optimist Club has some busy times planned.

First, members are inviting the public to a free reception Friday at Ballantyne Village Theatre.

It's all to kick off the club's support of the new Rise-N-Shine Inc., a Charlotte nonprofit that wants to sponsor more than 100 teenagers for a motivational program at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte.

The teenagers, in groups of 10, would meet weekly at the whitewater center for 10 weeks. They would take part in a ropes course, whitewater rafting, flat-water paddling, climbing wall activities and a community service project.

Optimist club members want to spread the word about an Oct. 6 fundraiser at the whitewater center that would benefit Rise-N-Shine. The charity targets youth exposed to violence, abuse, trauma or loss with therapeutic outdoor activities.

Ballantyne Optimist Club members hope to raise more than \$100,000 for the Rise-N-Shine charity annually, club Co-President Rob Murchison said.

It's "a big cause that everyone can relate to," said Murchison, co-founder of Intelligent Buildings in Ballantyne, a technology company.

Friday's theater event -- with free food, door prizes and a 13-minute movie about the youth whitewater project -- also gets the word out about the club.

It was founded in 2002 by Ballantyne Village co-developer George Sheild. After winding down because of a lack of membership, Murchison said he and Smith Foushee, executive with Bissell-Hayes Realtors, revitalized the club about a year ago.

The club now has almost 20 members and meets at 7:30 a.m. Fridays at Ballantyne Country Club. New members are welcome, Murchison said.

### Want to Get Involved?

- Ballantyne Optimist Club is sponsoring a free reception 6:30-8 p.m. Friday at Ballantyne Village Theatre to launch the Rise-N-Shine charity. The event will feature food, cash bar, door prizes and a 13-minute movie on the charity's youth program at the U.S. National Whitewater Center.
- Corporate sponsorships for Rise-N-Shine's youth whitewater project are available, ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000. Details: Rise-N-Shine program Director Andrea Larrick, [andrea@rise-n-shine.info](mailto:andrea@rise-n-shine.info); 704-759-2777.
- Find out more about the local Optimist club at [www.BallantyneOptimist.com](http://www.BallantyneOptimist.com).