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## Rwandan dancers visit yoga center

At the Lake Eden Arts Festival in Black Mountain a few weekends ago, Tina Parks' heart was stolen. She was watching Mizero, a group of 12 Rwandan orphans, drumming and dancing, and she knew she wanted to help them.

The troupe's performance at the nonprofit festival was their first outside of their village, and the beginning of a tour in the United States and Canada to raise money for a school and housing. Most of the children lost their parents in the Rwandan genocide or to complications from AIDS. The kids, ages 11 to 17, are among about 300 who live at a Christian orphanage in Rwanda, basically a dirt parking lot with a locked gate.

"They have flags and drums and ceramic pots they balance on their heads. It's very powerful. Their energy and drive is amazing," Parks said.

The group is made up of members of the Mizero Children of Rwanda, a nonprofit arts organization founded by Rwandan musician Jean Paul Samputu. Right before the children were supposed to leave Rwanda for their tour, most of their funding and sponsorship fell through. Now they need money to tour, in addition to the school and housing funds.

When Parks returned to Wilmington, she discovered that Mizero (which means "hope" in Kinyarwanda, the primary language of Rwanda) would be performing 8 p.m. today at the Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive. Independently, she contacted friends and media to get the word out. The performance is donations only and all proceeds go to help the orphans.

Lorri Resetar, instructor at Wilmington Yoga Center, has volunteered to travel with the group for the next two months to help them coordinate their stops until they reach their final destination, New York, on Dec. 19. Resetar and others from the yoga center discovered the troupe at its LEAF Festival performance.

"They told us their story and it just moved us, so we went up to them and said, 'If there's anything we can do to help, let us know,'" she said. "And there was."

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