

ST. LOUIS COUNTY

SINGLE MOMS ARE STATE'S POOREST

WAGES: A statewide study finds the county's single mothers have a median income of \$16,000 per year, while families led by single fathers have a median income of \$42,300.

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Single mothers in St. Louis County make less money than single mothers in any other Minnesota county with more than 60,000 people, according to a study conducted by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota.

Families led by women with children 18 and younger in St. Louis County have a median family income of \$16,000. Households led by men in the county have a median income of \$42,300, and married couples have a median income of \$68,900, the study found.

Lee Roper-Batker, president and CEO of the Women's Foundation, was in Duluth on Monday to present the report on the status of girls in Minnesota as part of a 15-city statewide tour. The disparity between incomes in the area was shocking, she said.

"What is going on to cause such a huge gap in pay?" Roper-Batker said. She said she hopes the study inspires **See MOMS, Page D2**

others to research causes.

Another statistic from the

study found a high rate of suicidal thoughts and attempts for girls in St. Louis County. In the past two years, 49 percent of girls have thought about or attempted suicide. The rate for boys in the county in the past two years is 33 percent.

Girls suffer from lower self-esteem and experience more physical and sexual abuse than boys in the state, the study found. And despite studying longer hours and having bigger aspirations, girls don't perform as well in meeting ACT college readiness benchmarks in all areas, but especially math and science.

"This is an important wake-up call for the health and well-being of girls," said Carol McGee Johnson, vice president of community philanthropy and programs for the foundation.

Nonwhite girls faced more challenges than their white counterparts across the board. White girls ages 15 to 19 had 28 live births per 1,000 females from 2002 to 2004, for example, but Hispanic girls had 133 live births in the

same period, black girls had 121 and American Indians had 111.

Paula Reed, president of the United Way of Greater Duluth, said the study's findings reaffirmed what her organization has learned from their own studies. The discrepancies between white and nonwhite girls detailed in the study were striking, she said.

"More nonwhite populations are affected by these issues," she said. "We need to be sensitive to that and aware of that."

Reed participated in a post-presentation focus group along with about a dozen other representatives from Duluth's political, nonprofit, philanthropic and youth-oriented organizations. The Women's Foundation will compile findings from the focus group, as well as ones held elsewhere in the state, for release later this summer.

The report is available online at www.wfmm.org.

Online

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