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HEADLINE: Foundation will present information about what holds girls back

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By Elliot Mann

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Why are girls more likely than boys to consider committing suicide? Why are high school females studying more than their male counterparts but performing worse on standardized tests? Why are women more likely than men to suffer poverty as they enter adulthood?

If you go

Who: The **Women's Foundation of Minnesota** will present findings about gender inequity and how it relates to girls and women.

When: 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Tuesday.

Where: United Way of Olmsted County, 903 W. Center St. in Rochester.

Representatives of the **Women's Foundation of Minnesota**, a statewide foundation that aims to answer these questions and develop strategies to stop similar trends, will stop in Rochester on Tuesday as part of its 15-city "Road to Equality" tour. The foundation recently released a report titled "Status of Girls in **Minnesota**." Members of the foundation will present the findings to the community and ask for input.

"By not paying attention to this research at the front end of the pipeline, we have bigger issues later on that not only affect women and their families, but also the entire state," said **Lee Roper-Batker**, president of the foundation. "Part of the reason to do this research is to have it be a wake-up call."

Roper-Batker said the research, which contains data from several state and sources, shows many females work hard and study hard but encounter many roadblocks to success. The symptoms are even worse for women of color, she said.

The report also found that while the overall teen pregnancy rate is declining, the American Indian and Hispanic teen birth rates are increasing. The data recorded 133 teenage births per 1,000 Hispanic teens, compared to 28 teenage births among every 1,000 white teens.

Another troubling statistic for Roper-Batker was that 27 percent of girls questioned in the 2005 **Minnesota** Student Survey answered that they had considered suicide.

Those mental health issues also troubled April Sutor of the United Way of Olmsted County. Sutor said people should be aware of the report's information, especially the data for Olmsted County. She hopes residents become engaged in the conversation, as does Roper-Batker.

Roper-Batker said collecting data without developing action plans is "pointless."

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Highlights: MN, MINNESOTA, Women's Foundation, Minnesota, Lee Roper-Batker