

## **LOCAL SOLUTIONS: THE HOPE PROJECT**

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Eugene (KMTR) - Reaching out to high risk teens in foster care before it's too late, that's the goal of a new project in Lane County. The Hope Project is the brainchild of the United Way of Lane County and Women and Philanthropy.

Instead of giving out referrals and money to various organizations, United Way has decided to pool those resources and focus directly on young women about to age out of the foster care system. The organization says that's a group that often falls through the cracks ending up on the street or in jail. Ten teens have been partnered with a mentor for the Hope Project. The mentors are all adult women and most are part of Women and Philanthropy. They offer guidance and support as the girl's transition into adulthood. Mentors help with things like searching for an apartment, looking for a job, getting a bank account.

Grace Serbu is a mentor, and says the goal is to help the teens become a success rather than a statistic.

“What we can offer is connections and opportunities to do things.” Said Serbu.

19-year-old Tiffany Sadler is participating in the program, Serbu is her mentor. She says even in a short time, the hope project has made a big difference in her life as she transitions out of foster care and into her own apartment.

“It's nice to have someone to hang out with and get me to do things that I normally wouldn't do.” Sadler said.

The girls will stay with the Hope Project for three years. The hope is to keep bringing new teens into the project, potentially offering something similar for boys in foster care.