

2021 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

PROJECT 16:49



**S**ixteen hours and forty-nine minutes is the time between the school day's last bell and the first the next morning.

During this time, impoverished and neglected young people can fall through the cracks.

Thanks to Wisconsin's Project 16:49, at-risk youth have a safety net beyond the classroom.

In the spirit of the man for whom this award is named, former NEA President Reg Weaver, Project 16:49 realizes that education doesn't stop at the school's steps.

Under the committed leadership of Executive Director Tammy DeGarmo, Project 16:49 works to address the plight of homeless and disenfranchised teens in the state's Rock County region. The area has identified over three hundred children who live a transient lifestyle, with over sixty percent having been physically or sexually abused, forty percent are survivors of human trafficking, and a sizable portion of LGBTQ youth becoming estranged from family members.

Project 16:49 steps in to provide basic life essentials including food, clothing, hygienic and personal care materials, school supplies, and most importantly, safe housing options in a world where teens are literally fighting to survive.

Project 16:49 manages a Transitional Living Program (TLP), providing spaces that can house eight children each for up to eighteen months. Students enrolled in TLP receive much more than just a roof over their heads; the program offers training in job seeking skills, money management, direction in the college application process, counseling in areas of personal safety, and therapeutic help in the wake of abusive situations. One hundred percent of the teens living in the transitional living homes have completed their high school education.

Project 16:49 is getting results. Ninety-two percent of participants graduate high school, and are armed with the skills to become self-sufficient adults. Public officials have taken notice, with the program receiving federal grants in 2020, ensuring their humanitarian efforts can continue to give young people a ray of hope after the last bell rings.

Project 16:49 provides a foundation to move homeless youth towards stability, and gives them options that offer a path to improve their quality of life.

Reg Weaver was known for coming out of his own pocket to buy food and winter coats for kids in need.

Project 16:49, like Weaver, is coming "out of pocket" for the community.