

# **Souper Bowl of Caring is a winning drive for Franciscan Center**

The Souper Bowl of Caring began in 1990 with a simple prayer during a Super Bowl weekend Presbyterian service in South Carolina. It has grown into a national ecumenical movement that has raised \$10 million for the poor.

Parishes, schools and youth ministry groups in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will work on Super Bowl weekend (Feb. 5 and 6) to benefit Baltimore City's Franciscan Center and its localized Souper Bowl of Caring.

Heather Newman, the center's associate director of development and marketing, leads the local Souper Bowl effort. The non-Catholic has been working since last summer at the center, which was founded by the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore in 1968 and is run by lay people and religious today. She has been changed by the experience.

"My own spirituality," Newman said, "has deepened because of the Franciscan Sisters."

The Franciscan Center aides Baltimoreans living below the poverty line, those who have lost support means, suffer from mental illness or have HIV/AIDS. The center aims to help clients with their emergency needs and change their situations.

Newman said 18 of the 23 teams participating in the local Souper Bowl of Caring this year have Catholic affiliations.

Newman said confirmation classes at Ss. Philip and James Parish have been active and hands-on in the Franciscan Center's efforts. She said St. Michael the Archangel in Overlea had already raised more than \$1,000 before the end of January. St. Elizabeth School in Baltimore, which educates young people with special needs, has been successful in its efforts as well, according to Newman.

"I know there are some parishes that have been participating for years and years," Newman said. "The response has been amazing."

M&T Bank and Under Armour have provided key sponsorships. Former Baltimore Colts such as Artie Donovan and Jim Mutscheller will participate in a Franciscan Center outreach Feb. 4.

The local Souper Bowl effort has motivated other denominations to participate. An added online component at [souperbowl.kintera.org](http://souperbowl.kintera.org) will allow collections to be held even if a major snowstorm sweeps through town, as it did last year.

“We’ve really opened the doors with technology,” said Franciscan Center Executive Director Edward McNally. “This kind of interactive, Internet-based outreach is very much in keeping with our mission.”

Newman said the Franciscan Center has been using Facebook and Twitter to help drum up interest.

McNally said the laity are crucial to making the Souper Bowl of Caring happen. He said inspiration comes from years of service by religious and clergy.

Super Bowl weekend is about real-life victories, McNally said.

“It’s a matter of justice,” he said.