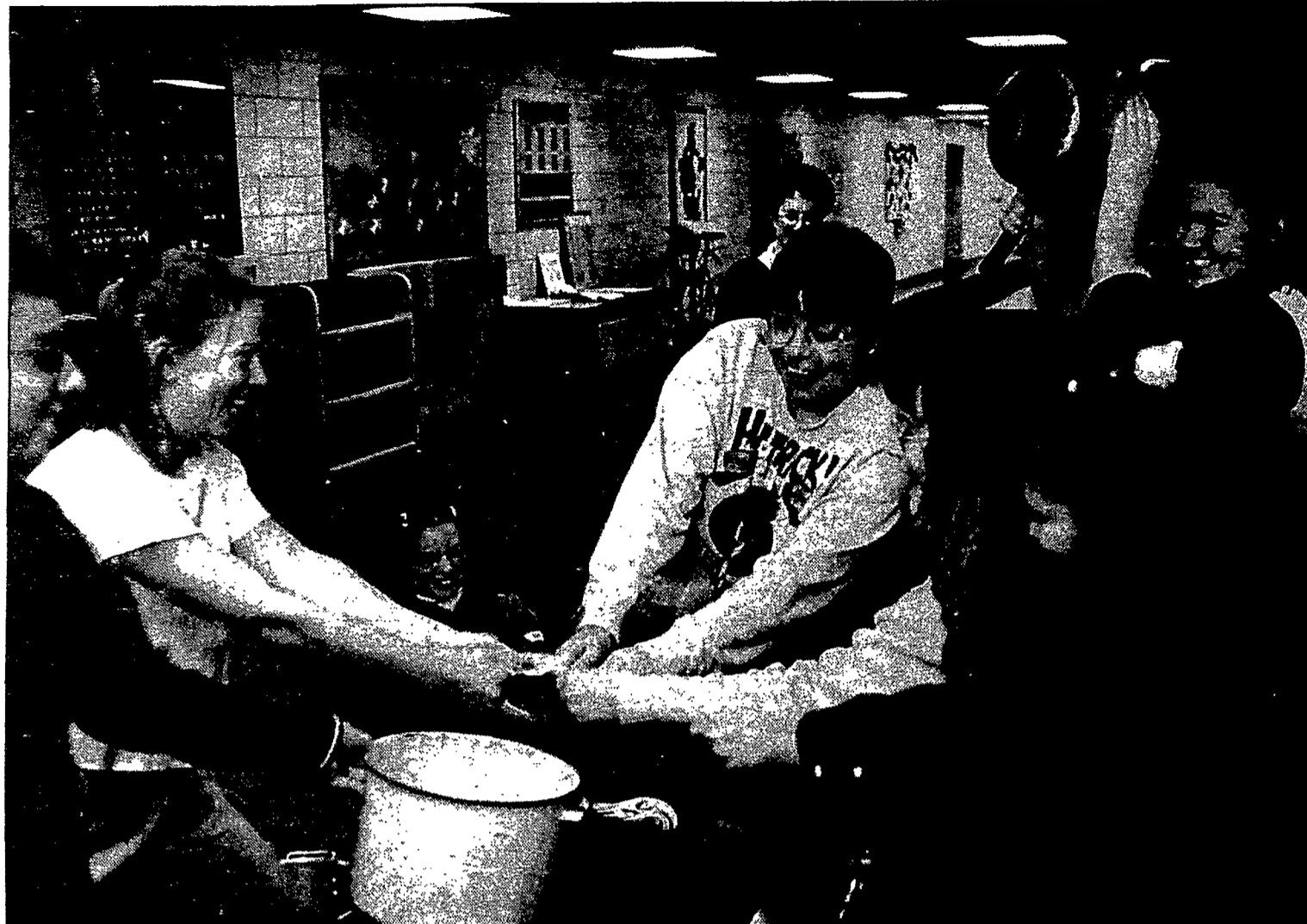


# More

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# Souper Bowl



From left, Brian Olek, Sheila Banks, Roberta King, Jenn Yaw and Cicely Neri fight for money to put in the soup pot on Jan. 9 at Guardian Angels Church, Henrietta. At right, Samantha Max teases Roberta, while Rachel Olek looks on from the floor. The church youth group was practicing what "not to do" for the "Souper Bowl," a food drive that will take place this Super Bowl weekend, Jan. 29-30, when youth groups will be collecting canned goods and money for local food pantries.

Think of the cash that flies around on Super Bowl Sunday due to television ads, betting and pizza parties.

Think of how much good could be accomplished if a percentage of that money could go toward helping the less fortunate.

That's why you may see people with collection containers standing at your church entrance on Super Bowl weekend, Jan. 29-30.

The "Souper Bowl of Caring" is an annual fundraising initiative embraced by many churches — both Catholic and non-Catholic — in the Diocese of Rochester. According to the national Souper Bowl of Caring office, approximately one dozen diocesan parishes take part. More often than not, the Souper Bowls are conducted as youth-group service projects.

The Souper Bowl of Caring was originated by a Presbyterian youth group in South Carolina in 1990. It became national in 1993 and has raised \$7 million overall. Each church gets to decide which charities will receive the donated funds; the total amount is then reported to the national Souper Bowl of Caring office.

Guardian Angels Church in Henrietta has fully embraced the Souper Bowl concept. Not only do youth-group members take up collections in "soup pots" at all weekend Masses on Super Bowl weekend, but they also conduct an overnight lock-in. According to Samantha Max, 14, the lock-in focuses on hunger issues through discussions and videos. In one segment of the lock-in, she said, youths must figure out how to survive on a very limited amount of money.

"It's kind of scary," Samantha said. "You really see that people go through that kind of stuff. We get electricity and water, and a lot of people don't have that."

Mary Bills, Guardian Angels' youth minister, added that youths also fast during the lock-in, only eating such items as rice, apples and cheese. The lock-in concludes with a Sunday-after-

Story by  
Mike Latona

Photo by  
Bill Hawken

noon shopping trip in which all the donated money is spent on goods for local food cupboards.

Samantha estimated that participation this year will be about 40 people — triple the amount from the inaugural year of 1998. She added that the lock-in will follow the same basic format as before — except that youths will probably be coaxed to arise a little earlier to collect money at the Sunday 8 a.m. Mass.

"Last year we still had our pajamas on and were walking down the hall, and people were coming in for Mass," Samantha said.

Depending on where you come across a Souper Bowl, you're bound to see all kinds of interesting garb. Kathy McQueen, who coordinates the Souper Bowl at St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street in Rochester, said that religious-education students patrol the church entrances dressed in football outfits. Among the volunteers this year, McQueen said, will be her 12-year-old twin daughters, Grace and Anne.

At St. Mary of the Lake Church in Ontario, Jamie Abaid, 17, noted that youth-group members enjoy greeting parishioners in full cooking garb, wearing chef hats and aprons and holding out a large cooking pot with a wooden spoon to collect offerings.

"Many small children enjoyed putting change in and hearing it rattle," she said. "And I'm sure we were an amusing sight in our hats."

Amanda Nagel, 16, is among the St. Mary of the Lake youth who will volunteer again for this year's Souper Bowl. She said she was quite pleased with the response from her parish last year.

"I was very surprised. It seemed like everyone who left the church put something in there," Amanda said.

At Holy Rosary Church in Rochester, James Herring, 16, has used his creativity for a Souper Bowl poster that says "Help us help others." James added that he knows first-hand the importance of supporting such outreaches as food pantries.

"I haven't been rich, and our family has needed help before," James said.

He added that Holy Rosary parishioners have been very supportive of past Souper Bowls.

"Most of them just asked what it was all about, and when I told them, they were glad to give," James said.

Judy Borrelli, Holy Rosary's religious-education administrator, said they only ask parishioners to donate \$1 each.

"Of course, we're willing to take more," she remarked. In one case, St. Mary of the Lake got a lot more than a dollar for last year's Souper Bowl: Jamie reported that an anonymous donor gave \$500.

"The donor wished to affirm his or her appreciation for the teens' involvement," Jamie said.

Now that's being appreciative!

Coming next week:  
E-mail spiritual messages