

AWAKENING THE CHURCH  
TO THE REALITY THAT  
AMERICA'S ULTIMATE  
FOOTBALL PLATFORM FOSTERS  
SEX TRAFFICKING IN  
MONUMENTAL NUMBERS



# Super Bowl secrets

By Sara Shelton

**K**ay Bennett doesn't typically spend a lot of time on Bourbon Street—especially not at 2 a.m. But on a February night in 2013, that's exactly where she found herself.

New Orleans played host to Super Bowl XLVII that night, and Bennett, in her 16th year as director of Baptist Friendship House, a transitional housing program for homeless women and children in the city, knew the event brought more to the city than just throngs of football fans.

"The Super Bowl is commonly known as the single largest incidence of human trafficking in the United States each year," Bennett explains, "and now it was in our city. We saw it as an opportunity to step in and partner with other local organizations to do some very specific outreach—even if it's the kind of outreach that puts you in the middle of the madness on Bourbon Street in the late hours of the night."

It was there on Bourbon Street that Bennett came face to face with the reality behind the statistic. After noticing several men repeatedly enter and leave through the side door of what looked like a typical shop, Bennett and her team approached the business and were shocked at what they found.

"We looked inside and saw a room full of men, all lined up and wrapped around the room as if they were in line at an amusement park, waiting to take



a turn with one of the women who were being sold for sex that night."

Bennett and her team did what they could in that moment; they reported the incident to local authorities, left resources nearby for the women and prayed for their safety and rescue.

"That's the hardest part about this kind of ministry," Bennett says, "You see it happening in your own backyard, you reach out and report it, and some-

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times all you're left with is the prayer that God will do the rest." She pauses with a sigh. "The darkness over human trafficking is palpable and strong—but I know God's light is stronger. The further into this ministry I go, the harder I cling to that light."

### Confronting darkness

The fight against human trafficking isn't a new one for Bennett. Her team at Baptist Friendship House has been working to rescue and bring restoration to the trafficked women and children in New Orleans for more than five years. They partner with both local and national organizations to connect trafficked women and children to places of rescue and restoration. They provide training in local schools, churches, hospitals and more to raise awareness of the issue and help others consider what their own role might be in the fight against human trafficking. Prior to her own involvement, Bennett, like many others in North America, didn't realize how close to home the sale of human lives was taking place.

"I think a common misconception about human trafficking is that it's an international issue—it's something we hear about in the United States but [we] sort of push it aside because we think it's happening in a far off place. I thought that too—until a man approached one of the homeless women living at our facility in the park across the street and asked to buy her 1-year-old daughter to sell into sex slavery. That was eye opening for our ministry. How

much closer can it get than right across the street?"

### Brutal growth industry

The human trafficking industry is growing rapidly—both worldwide and in North America. Of the estimated 27 million labor and sex slaves in the world today, roughly 200,000 of them are in the U.S. It is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world, second only to the sale of illegal drugs, and taking in almost \$32 billion dollars annually.

"The difference here is that we're talking about people," says Kendall Wolz, staff member at Baptist Friendship House. "Drugs are destructive and terrible, yes, but they're sold once, used once and it's done. A trafficked person is sold over and over, up to 40 times a day before they're forced to do it all over again the next day."

As advocates for the women and children of New Orleans, Bennett and Wolz immediately recognized both the challenges and opportunities the arrival of the Super Bowl would bring to their city. Law enforcement officials estimate that nearly 10,000 prostitutes were brought to Miami during the 2010 Super Bowl and up to 133 arrests were made for prostitution in one night in Dallas during the 2011 Super Bowl.

"We knew it was bringing with it a lot of darkness and that increased our resolve to combat that with

the light of Christ," Wolz says.

Before going forward with any sort of plans for outreach and rescue during the Super Bowl in their city, Bennett and Wolz did the only thing they knew to do: they prayed.

"Prayer is the first thing anyone can do to fight human trafficking," Bennett explains. "It's certainly the first thing we always do. It helps push back the darkness and allows us to ask God, 'Where would You have me join You in this battle?'"

Along these lines, Bennett and Wolz used a 40-day prayer initiative leading up to the Super Bowl to direct prayer around human trafficking, sharing it with local churches, partners around the country and through social media. Each day contained specific ways to pray for those involved in the human trafficking industry and the fight against it during the Super Bowl that year. They also encouraged other churches and visiting mission teams to prayerwalk through the community, asking for God's protection and presence during Super Bowl weekend.

From there, the women took strategic steps to raise awareness and educate the right people and places on the incidences of human trafficking during the Super Bowl.

"We really thought through the question of where people might come into contact with victims of trafficking that weekend and maybe not even know it—hospitals, hotels, law enforcement offices. God really opened the doors for us to go into these places prior to Super Bowl weekend and give some specific education and resources to everyone from

doctors and nurses in hospitals to local law enforcement officials to the people working the front desks at local hotels."

As Super Bowl weekend came, Bennett and Wolz worked alongside other organizations combatting human trafficking to help report suspected incidences of trafficking and prostitution as well as connect victims with the resources to seek rescue.

"We just tried to be visible, available, prayerful and ready to do whatever God asked of us," Bennett recalls.

### Expanding Super Bowl outreach

While she can't elaborate on many of the details of what sort of rescue and restorations took place that weekend to protect the safety of the women involved, Bennett will say that God answered—and continues to answer—many of their prayers surrounding human trafficking in their city.

"God was with us leading up to that weekend and all throughout it He remained. These are His children, and He wants their restoration more than any of us."

It was this message that resonated in the heart of Kerri Johnson, women's ministry leader at Graffiti 2 Community Ministries in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx, N.Y. Just months after the Super Bowl took place in New Orleans, Johnson heard Bennett share at a conference about the work she and the team at Baptist Friendship House did to battle the darkness of human trafficking in their city,

## State Report Cards

Shared Hope International, an organization working in the prevention of human trafficking, conducted a study of trafficking laws in each of the 50 states. Each state was given a grade in response to the findings. Below are the grades for the states where the last four Super Bowls were held, as well as the grades of the host states for the next three Super Bowls:

Florida (2010)  
**B**

Texas (2011)  
**B**

Indiana (2012)  
**C**

Louisiana (2013)  
**A**

New Jersey (2014)  
**C**

Arizona (2015)  
**C**

California (2016)  
**F**



See how your state ranks in the fight against human trafficking at [sharedhope.org](http://sharedhope.org).

# Graffiti 2 equips churches for LoveLoud

**A**s pastor and planter of Graffiti 2 Community Ministries in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx for nearly eight years, Andrew Mann has seen incredible growth in the ministry. In an area plagued by gang activity, poverty and crime, Mann and his team have created a safe haven for children and families in Graffiti 2, offering programs ranging from weekly Bible studies and Sunday worship services to daily after-school tutoring for local students to mentorship programs for the community's young men. Now, in partnership with the North American Mission Board's LoveLoud movement, Mann will be able to lead others to do the same by making Graffiti 2 a LoveLoud training center.

"I started here in Mott Haven because Taylor Field and Graffiti Community Ministries in Manhattan took the time to invest in me, help me realize my calling and offer me the training and support to go out and fulfill it," Mann explains. "I'm excited about the opportunity to do the same for other people—to give them exposure to a different context of ministry that might help define their calling."

As a LoveLoud training center, Graffiti 2 will offer individuals the opportunity to serve alongside Mann and his team as they receive personal mentoring and development under the guidance of leadership actively working in mercy and compassion ministries. The hope is to see leaders like Mann and ministries like Graffiti 2's show up in neighborhoods like Mott Haven all over North America.

"A growing number of churches and individuals are taking seriously the Lord's call to care for the poor, oppressed and neglected people of their communities, but need help knowing how to do that in a biblically faithful way," says Ryan West, LoveLoud national coordinator. "By partnering with churches to create LoveLoud training centers, we hope to see a generation emerge that is identified as socially conscious and biblically faithful to lead Southern Baptists in these ministries."



PHOTO BY SUSAN WHITLEY

For Mann, the opportunity to come alongside others as they prepare to take LoveLoud ministry back to their own communities is an exciting one.

"Becoming a LoveLoud training center and hosting LoveLoud missionaries is going to allow us to have a greater impact in ministry," Mann says. "I like the idea of Graffiti 2 becoming a place that disciples and trains leaders to create ministries for communities like Mott Haven all over the country."



For more information on LoveLoud, visit [namb.net/loveloud](http://namb.net/loveloud). Learn more about Mann at [anniearmstrong.com](http://anniearmstrong.com).

and she knew exactly what to do next.

"There I was, hearing Kay share about the realities of human trafficking in her city and specifically about what it meant for them to have the Super Bowl there last year, and I almost couldn't breathe," Johnson recalls. "I work in the metro New York area, and the Super Bowl is coming to us this year, and, after hearing Kay, there was no way I wasn't going to get involved."

Johnson quickly connected both with Bennett and Wolz, inviting them to Graffiti 2 in September to host a time of education and training for churches in the area to begin thinking through their own involvement in human trafficking ministry during their city's Super Bowl in 2014.

"I felt like the first thing we could do was educate our people," Johnson says. "I kept thinking about how many things we probably see every day in our city that should be red flags to us, but, because we don't know, we don't recognize the darkness. I want our eyes to be open as a community going into the Super Bowl, but also going forward into the fight against human trafficking."

## Partners in the battle

Andrew Mann, pastor and director at Graffiti 2, echoes this sentiment.

"Kay and Kendall are helping us become aware of what's really going on around us and what's coming with the arrival of the Super Bowl this year," Mann says. "Our prayer now is that God will continue to open our eyes and the Holy Spirit will guide us to

action in response."

This was certainly the case for Stephanie Collins. A member of Urban Harvest Ministries, a neighboring church of Graffiti 2, Collins attended the Ben-

## Facts & Stats

- There are an estimated **27 million slaves** worldwide today—enough to fill the New Orleans Superdome to capacity almost 353 times.
- There are roughly **200,000 slaves in the United States** today—the equivalent of the full rosters of close to 3,773 football teams.
- **Two children are sold into slavery every minute** worldwide—meaning 508 children were sold during the 254 minutes of the 2013 Super Bowl broadcast.
- The human trafficking industry brings in nearly **\$32 billion dollars each year**—that's 139 times more than the \$230 million made by broadcast ad sales for the 2013 Super Bowl.
- The average slave is sold for no more than **\$90**—the cheapest ticket for the 2013 Super Bowl started at \$650.

*Human trafficking statistics provided by [enditmovement.com](http://enditmovement.com).*

nett and Wolz training and found herself spurred to response.

"My heart was deeply moved," Collins says of the event. "I didn't know before, but now my eyes are open—now I know. I am already praying through ways I can take this back to my church and get them involved during the Super Bowl this year, because, as a church and a body of Christ, we have to act."

Bennett agrees. "People often ask me what I think

will fix the problem of sex trafficking and I always say, 'The Church.' This isn't a problem belonging to the judicial system or law enforcement or the government. This is a problem for the Church, and, as the Church, we have access to the only real hope of ending it—the hope and power of Christ.”

Looking ahead to the arrival of the Super Bowl in New Jersey, Johnson, with the help of Bennett and Wolz, is already praying, educating and preparing her congregation to take part in the rescue and res-

toration of the trafficked women and children surrounding this year's game.

“None of us have any excuses anymore,” Johnson says. “We've been informed, and now we have to act. Now I pray that the reality of the darkness of human trafficking in our backyard will haunt us so deeply that we can't help but respond with the love of Christ.” **[OM]**

*Sara Shelton writes for On Mission.*

## 13 answers to human trafficking

1 Pray for the women being sold, the men purchasing them and the pimps who prostitute them.

2 Connect with and volunteer at local organizations and ministries already working in your community.

3 Host training for medical care providers to recognize the signs of human trafficking in patients and offer the best treatment to victims.

4 Familiarize yourself with state and federal trafficking laws and encourage lawmakers in your state to continue to strengthen and pass legislation against human trafficking.

5 Help trafficking victims get connected with counselors to provide treatment for mental and emotional trauma.

6 Connect survivors with churches or faith-based organizations who can assist in meeting their spiritual needs as they recover.

7 Volunteer to teach and tutor trafficking victims in literacy, computer skills, ESL or GED courses.

8 Assist in providing training in job readiness skills (interview skills, job applications, resume creation, etc.) to human-trafficking survivors.

9 Help trafficking survivors learn the basics of financial planning, and assist them in setting up checking accounts, establishing a budget, etc.

10 Collect furniture and other household items for survivors as they transition to permanent homes.

11 Continue to educate and advocate for victims and survivors of human trafficking by sharing about the issue at your church, school or other organizations in your community.

12 Read the news, follow legislation and continue to stay current on the existence of human trafficking and what is being done to combat it in your community.

13 Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline (888-373-7888) to report any signs or suspicions of human trafficking in your community.



Find more information on ways to get involved or download a detailed PDF providing resources on human trafficking ministry at [namb.net/human-trafficking](http://namb.net/human-trafficking).