

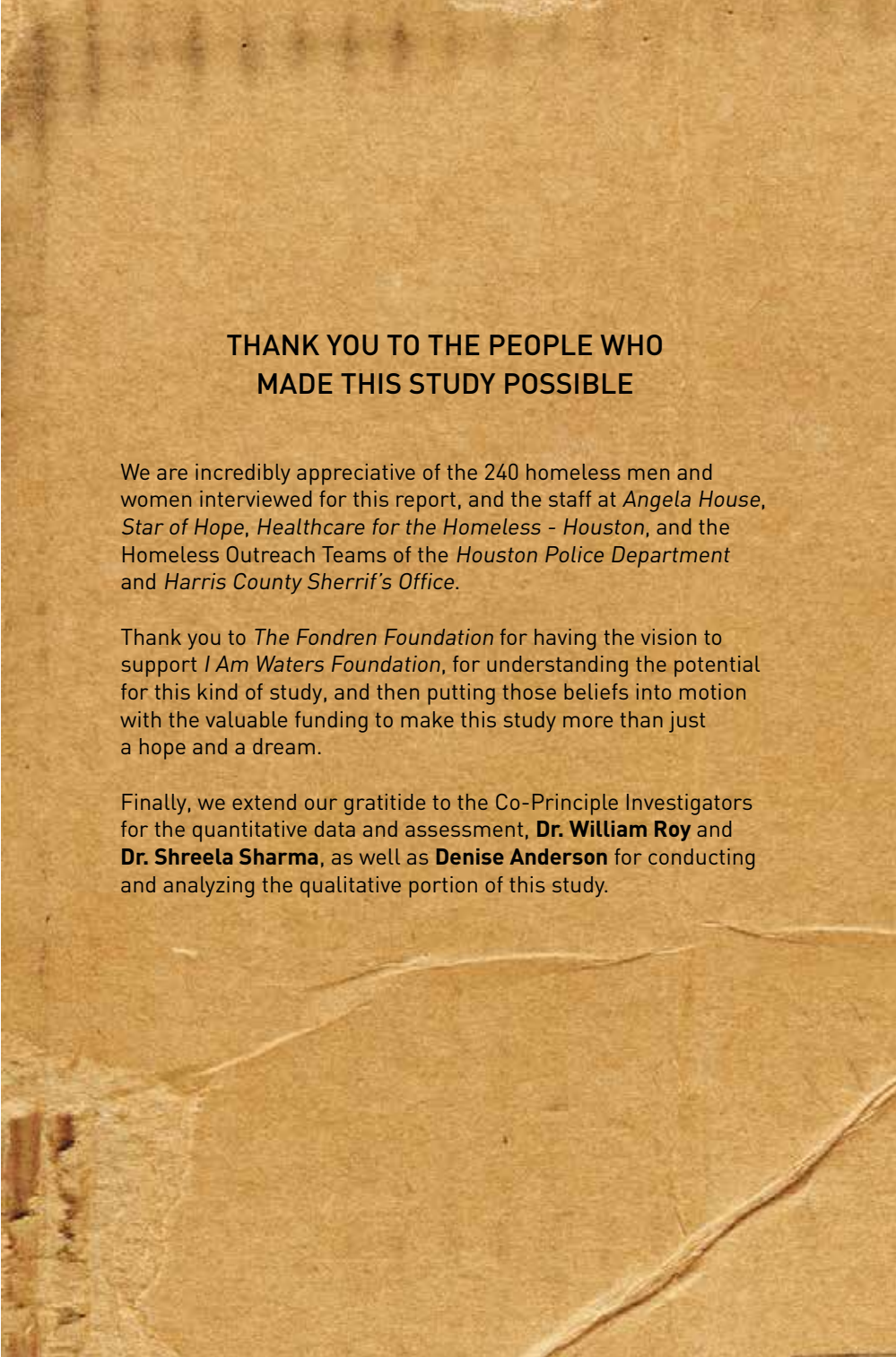


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**THANK YOU TO THE PEOPLE WHO
MADE THIS STUDY POSSIBLE**

We are incredibly appreciative of the 240 homeless men and women interviewed for this report, and the staff at *Angela House*, *Star of Hope*, *Healthcare for the Homeless - Houston*, and the Homeless Outreach Teams of the *Houston Police Department* and *Harris County Sherrif's Office*.

Thank you to *The Fondren Foundation* for having the vision to support *I Am Waters Foundation*, for understanding the potential for this kind of study, and then putting those beliefs into motion with the valuable funding to make this study more than just a hope and a dream.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to the Co-Principle Investigators for the quantitative data and assessment, **Dr. William Roy** and **Dr. Shreela Sharma**, as well as **Denise Anderson** for conducting and analyzing the qualitative portion of this study.



When Water Meets A Higher Need: A Study of an Unprecedented Mission

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“A (homeless woman) had a bottle with the word HOPE. She said, ‘I hope I get this job.’ She had the bottle all day, and I saw she still had it when she returned later that day. She said, ‘You know, I didn’t get the job. But the word HOPE kept me going. If I didn’t have that bottle I might have given up and come back earlier. When I was looking for a job, I kept the bottle turned so I could see the word HOPE... It kept me going.”

- STAR OF HOPE STAFF



I AM WATERS
FOUNDATION

When we turn away from a problem, we become the problem.

What if we could take all the efforts, money and resources we dedicate as a society to solving homelessness and give them critical, analytical scrutiny? Then do more of what works and reform and reallocate what doesn't.

I Am Waters Foundation, with its innovative and unique program to provide clean safe drinking water wrapped in words of inspiration to America's homeless is at the forefront of a paradigm shift. We believe in transparency, efficiency, data-driven solutions and less blind economic outlay so that we may positively impact homelessness in America.

I Am Waters not only addresses a basic and critical need of America's homeless but we also ask the tough questions, study current conditions, and assess the needs of this vulnerable population. We provide answers and inspiration for the kinds

of things that work and strategize how to push the boundaries of success further.

Born of the basic need for clean, safe drinking water, *I Am Waters'* program has become a tool that provides insight into this important issue. We present ***When Water Meets a Higher Need: A Study of an Unprecedented Mission***. With this study we gain a deeper perspective on our impact and ability to act as a catalyst for change.

We invite all organizations to take an objective look at the efficacy of their programs based on recidivism and how they are stopping the flow of Americans into homelessness. For the men, women, children, veterans, and disabled who live homeless in America, we are asking you to read this report as one small step towards better understanding how to influence a situation we are not powerless to change.

How many people are homeless in America and who are they?

The homeless living in shelters and on the streets of America are only the tip of the iceberg, and nobody knows just how big the bottom is. How can the human service system solve a problem it has yet to clearly define? For example:

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports that there are “1.5 million Americans with no place to call home.”**
- The National Center for Homeless Education reports “the number of homeless students enrolled in public school districts during School Year 2014-15 was 1,263,323.”***
- HUD also states “On a single night in 2016, 549,928 people were experiencing homelessness in the United States.”****
- 4.2 million youth ages 13 to 25 experience a form of homelessness over a 12-month period.”****

The above numbers demonstrate that there is no concrete and consistent methodology for counting people experiencing homelessness. Unlike the U.S. census, it is impossible to go door to door to count the homeless because they do not have a door. As a result, it was important that *I Am Waters*’ study be based on a solid foundation in order to accurately capture the breadth of its program’s impact. The defined and diverse sampling of people consisted of **240** homeless sheltered and unsheltered individuals: **71 (29.5%)** in the control group who had never received water from *I Am Waters* and **169 (70.5%)** in the intervention group who participated in the program.

This is what we learned...

*The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress – Part 2, dated October 2016

**Federal Data Summary School Years 2012-2013 to 2014-15: Education for Homeless Children and Youth (with funding from the U.S. Department of Education), dated December 2016

***The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) – Part 1, dated November 2016

****Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America, November 2017, by Voices of Youth Count based at the Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and made possible in part through a grant from HUD



70%

HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE AND/OR
SOME HIGHER EDUCATION

61%

ARE WORKING FOR PAY OR
LOOKING FOR A JOB

58%

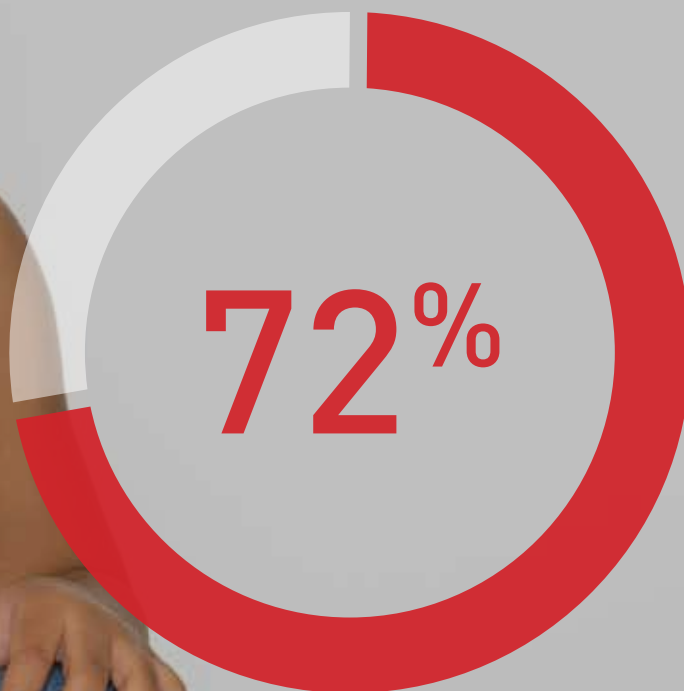
HAVE BEEN HOMELESS FOR
LONGER THAN 1 YEAR

45%

REPORTED BEING HOMELESS
FOR THE FIRST TIME

45%

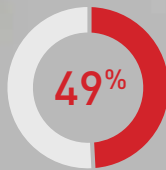
HAVE NEVER USED
THE SHELTER SYSTEM



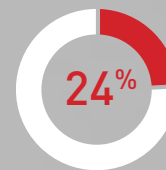
OF ALL HOMELESS RESPONDENTS ARE **THIRSTY** ALL OR MOST OF THE TIME



OF ALL THE SERVICE CARE PROVIDERS SEE **DEHYDRATION** AS A PROBLEM FOR THE HOMELESS THEY SERVE



OF ALL HOMELESS REPORTED THAT THEY RECEIVED **LITTLE OR NO WATER** FROM THE SHELTER SYSTEM



OF HOMELESS CARE PROVIDERS HAVE PROGRAMS **TO REACH THE 45%** OF THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS THAT NEVER USE THE SHELTER SYSTEM

What does a homeless person really need? Why water? Why hope?

A person's home is not only a place of shelter and comfort, but it is also the main source for one of life's essential needs — water. People without a home rarely have the funds to meet their basic need for water by buying it. Shelters provide water with meals, but many shelters also restrict access beyond these meal times. Additionally, drinking fountains have disappeared from public places in recent years eliminating yet another source of water for the homeless. As a result, the number one barrier to safe, clean drinking water in the United States is homelessness.

The homeless can appear to be a pretty bleak group to the general public. They look and feel hopeless;

however, everyone is worthy of hope regardless of their station in life or their appearance. There must be a psychological shift from within the individual to effectuate positive behavioral change, and a homeless person must choose to initiate a journey by which change can occur. *I Am Waters* provides an invitation to the journey and catalyst for change through a bottle of water and a word of inspiration.

“When I drink it, it actually makes me feel like you put love in the bottle... like to get the water, you put love and peace and dreams and all that in it. It just makes me feel loved.”

- HOMELESS RESPONDENT

Water

The most basic of life's needs is not being met in the homeless population. When was the last time you saw a public drinking fountain? Common decency demands we begin here.

Hope

I Am Waters' program is a pioneering innovation in a space where there is constant chaos. Life on the streets necessitates being constantly on guard. The homeless are in perpetual survival mode, and *I Am Waters* provides hope that transcends their confusion.

I Am Waters

I Am Waters provides clean, safe drinking water wrapped in a word of inspiration. One bottle of water with a single word on it is a thousand different bottles to a thousand different people depending on what each person needs. The existing system has no answer for this type of personalized connection and empowerment.

How can a single word cause a system-wide paradigm shift?

While service care providers surveyed for this study overwhelmingly acknowledged *I Am Waters'* success in physically hydrating the homeless, they also reported that the messages on the bottles play an important role to the system itself and to the partner staff. The words not only act as an agent of positive behavioral change for the homeless, but also for the workers and the greater system.

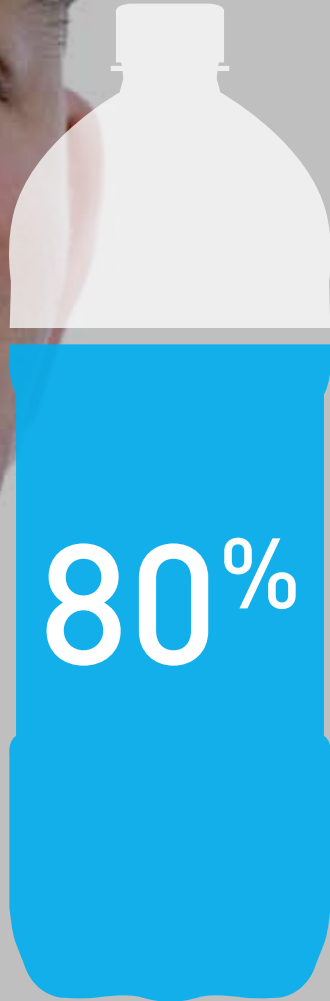
Providers surveyed responded that the emotions they most frequently associate with *I Am Waters* are “support” and “hope.” The service care providers, especially health care workers, are critical components within the system, and people on the front lines suffer high rate of burnout. For them to feel support-

ed and hopeful – because of *I Am Waters'* program – is invaluable.

I Am Waters' program brings homeless people into the system and increases the level of trust between the service care providers and homeless. It provides an instant synchronicity that previously did not exist between the homeless and those who serve them.

“They don’t know what to expect. They’ve never met me and so giving them the water sets that ground-work. They grow to know that their needs will be met. I show that I’m going to respect their needs.”

– HEALTHCARE FOR THE HOMELESS STAFF MEMBER



OF THE PROVIDERS SURVEYED STATED
THAT THE WORD ON THE *I AM WATERS*
BOTTLES IS IMPORTANT TO PARTNER'S
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOMELESS

HEAT STROKE

47%

MUSCLE CRAMPS

46%

DIABETES

27%

DEHYDRATION

20%

LIVER
DISEASE

6%

GOUT

6%

KIDNEY
DISEASE

5%

97%



OF THE HOMELESS SERVICE CARE PROVIDERS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT *I AM WATERS* PROGRAM **FACILITATES A REDUCTION** IN DEHYDRATION ISSUES AMONG HOMELESS

What are the human costs of devastating thirst?

Have you ever had heat stroke? It is the most serious form of heat injury and considered a medical emergency. Heat stroke can kill or cause damage to the brain and other internal organs. Nearly half of homeless people surveyed experienced heat stroke and treatment can be difficult to come by for people living on the street.

Men, women and children experiencing homelessness suffer from any number of health problems, just like the rest of us. They live with diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease and cancer, and these conditions can be exacerbated by a lack of drinking water.

Prolonged dehydration causes brain cells to shrink, cognition and motor skills to be greatly impaired, and the liver and other bodily organs to become

dysfunctional. In extreme heat, death can occur prematurely. Even the simplest of tasks is difficult in an unstable and transient situation when basic needs are not met. Daily tasks, (e.g. navigating bus routes, filling out job applications, or conversing coherently) can be challenging for the homeless, many of whom suffer cognitively from a critical lack of potable drinking water.

I Am Waters is the first line of defense against heat related injuries and death amongst the homeless and is still the only organization providing this unique program after 7 years.

"I like the water because it gives me hope that when I walk outside in 100+ degree heat, I won't pass out."

– HOMELESS RESPONDENT

How do unorthodox methods lead to uncommon success?

Providing physical and spiritual hydration for people experiencing homelessness is a novel approach to positively impacting homelessness, and one that has never been done before.

The words on the bottles are often more meaningful to the homeless than the water itself, and frequently have a psychological impact that parallels that of a therapist. The words act as a virtual counselor, 24 hours a day-7 days a week. When a disenfranchised individual such as a homeless person, reads, ponders, and spends time with the word on the bottle, this study revealed improved levels of self-esteem. Increased self-esteem gives rise over time to self-empowerment, which leads to constructive changes in and potentially life-altering behavior (e.g. the pursuit of a job, education, housing, stability, and community).

I Am Waters' program has become a savvy technological answer which has covered more ground and reached more homeless men, women and children than any other program. It's the simplicity and intellectual proposition that we've brought into the human service space that did not formerly exist. By thinking outside of the box, *I Am Waters* has demonstrated quantifiable and profound results — both for the homeless and for the system.

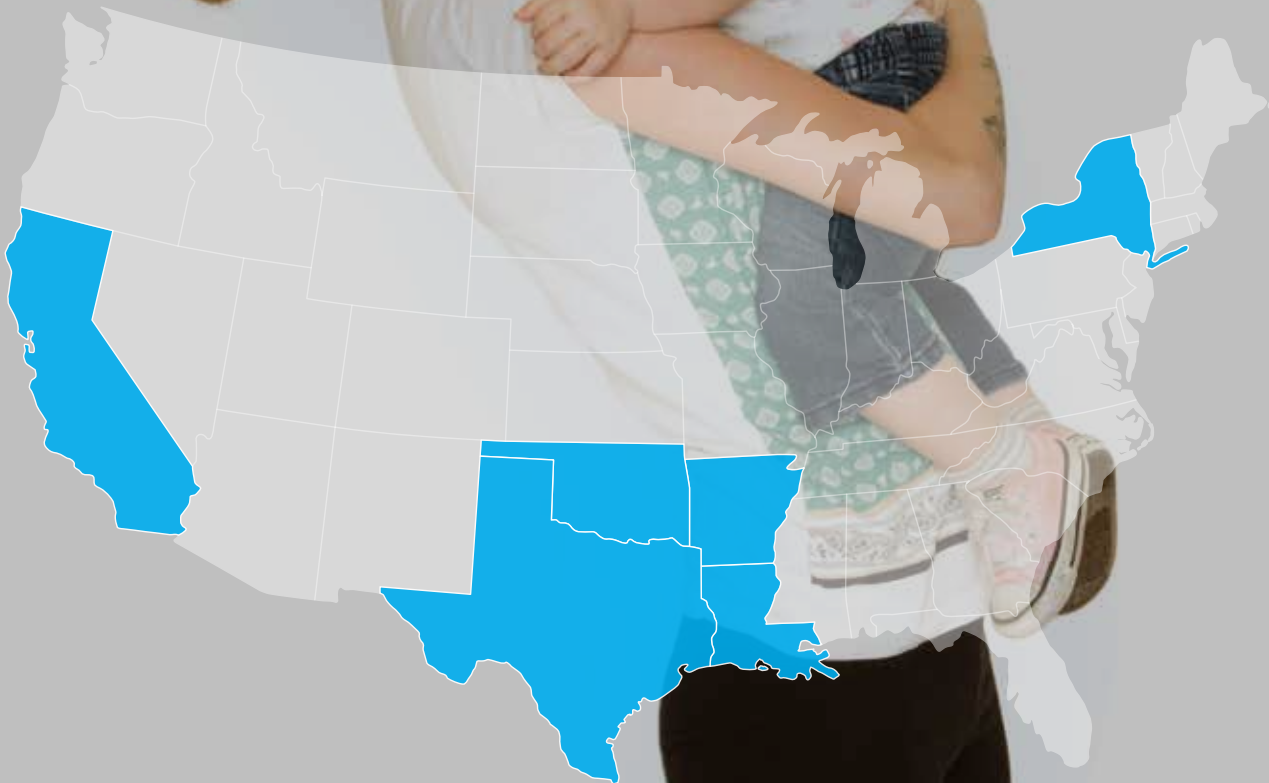
Further, the program is replicable and scalable and can be implemented into any environment that relates to the homeless. This will move the needle farther and faster than ever before for the growing number of homeless in America.



63% OF ALL HOMELESS SURVEYED REPORT
THAT THE WORDS ON THE BOTTLE
PROVIDE **CALM AND PEACE**

47% OF HOMELESS SURVEYED REPORT
THE WORDS ON THE BOTTLE MADE THEM
FEEL **"I CAN ACHIEVE..."**

**"Kate and Kaileigh"
Homeless
Houston, TX**



**I AM WATERS HAS PROVIDED 42 SHELTERS IN 6 STATES
WITH OVER 4.2 MILLION ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY
BOTTLES OF CLEAN, SAFE DRINKING WATER.**

***I Am Waters* — A revolutionary approach towards ending homelessness**

I Am Waters Foundation has spent the last seven years engaging with the homeless, visiting them in shelters, hearing their stories, and better understanding their needs. At the same time, we've gained knowledge about the homeless service system and the programs that have a positive effect. This journey of becoming what we are today has been no small task because there was no pre-established path for such a revolutionary approach.

Since 2009, we have provided **42** shelters in **6** states with over **4.2** million environmentally friendly bottles of clean, safe drinking water wrapped in a word of inspiration delivered to hundreds of thousands of homeless people. Today, thanks to this study, we have evolved into an evidence-based program with quantitative and qualitative results.

I Am Waters remains the only organization in the United States with a program that provides this unique service to people experiencing homelessness. When homeless service organizations embrace

this program, the impact is instantaneous and measurable based on the results of this study. We believe that every non-profit working in the space to end homelessness would be well-equipped by having *I Am Waters* as a tool in their plan and strategic approach to reach the homeless.

While there is no "one size fits all" solution to homelessness in America, *I Am Waters* meets the homeless where they are and this is the first and most important step to engagement. The water and the word are invitations for the homeless to initiate a conversation within themselves, to begin the process of reintegration back into society.

"I Am Waters has helped me through the worst of times. They were there when it was so hot and my mouth was so dry that I could barely work up enough saliva to speak. Their water and inspirational message was enough for me to push on and strive for greater things on a daily basis."

-HOMELESS RESPONDENT

Dr. William Roy
Professor Emeritus UCLA
Department of Sociology

Former Vice-Chair and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Sociology, **UCLA**, Dr. Roy designed the quantitative study for **I Am Waters Foundation**. His areas of expertise include social stratification, political sociology, sociological methodology, and issues in macrosociology. His research has included the social construction of society, the relationship of culture and social inequality, large scale political transformations, and the relationship between economic change and state formation.

Dr. Shreela Sharma
Associate Professor
UTHealth

Dr. Sharma is Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Human Genetics, and Environmental Sciences, with a doctoral minor in biostatistics and behavioral sciences, as well as a B.A. and M.Sc in physical therapy at the **University of Texas**. She is also Co-Director of **UTHealth's** Dietetic Internship Program. Her research interests include behavioral epidemiology with a focus on chronic disease prevention among children and parents from low-income, ethnically diverse populations.

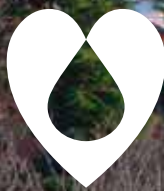
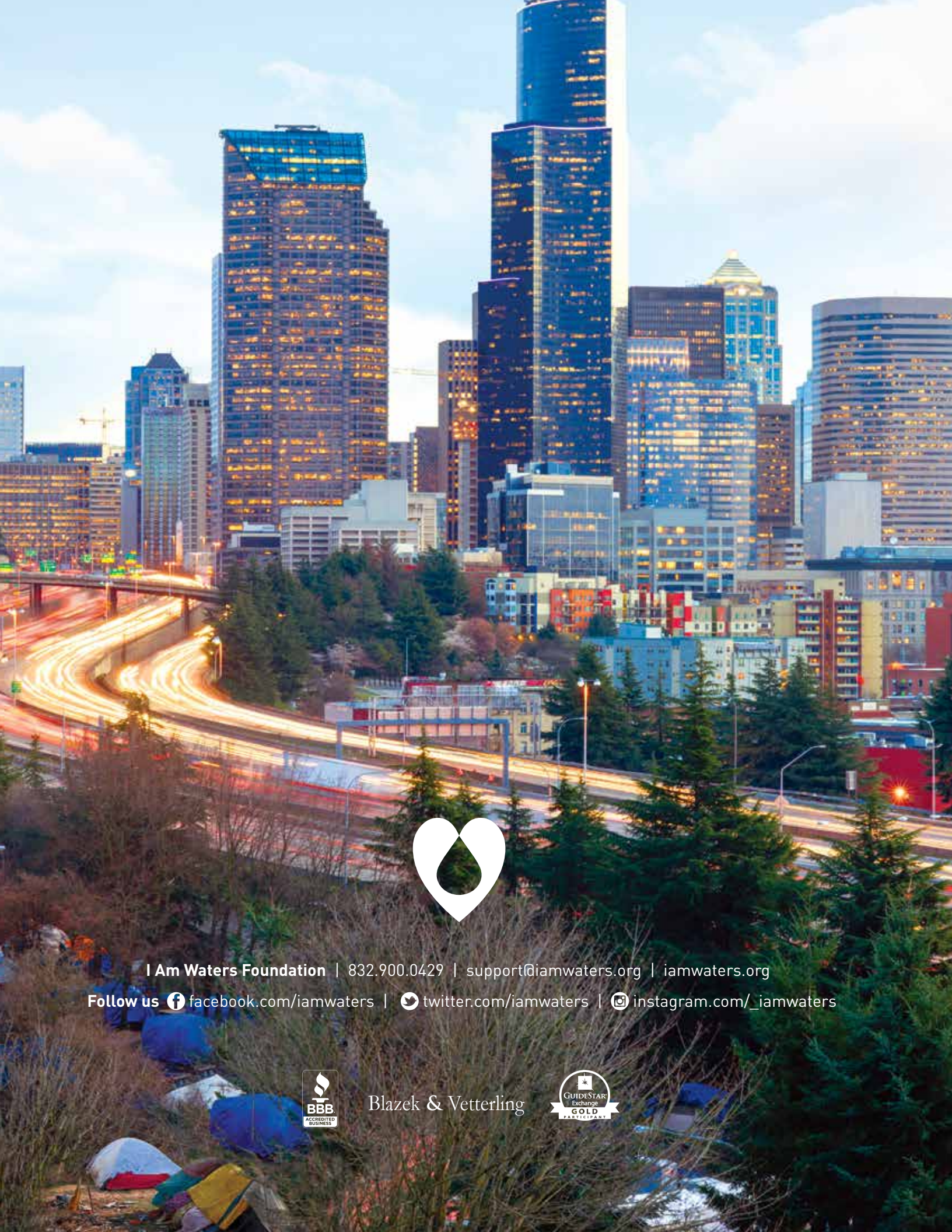
Denise Anderson
Focus Group Moderator
SpencerHall

Denise is an experienced Marketing Consultant who developed and conducted the qualitative study for **I Am Waters Foundation**. Her specialties include qualitative research via focus groups and ethnography. Denise has over twenty years of experience, including positions as Brand Manager at **The Coca-Cola Company, S.C. Johnson and Sons**, and **Nabisco**. She has a B.S. in Economics from **The Wharton School** and earned her MBA from **Duke University's Fuqua School of Business**.








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I Am Waters Foundation | 832.900.0429 | support@iamwaters.org | iamwaters.org

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Blazek & Vetterling

