



UNSHELTERED PERSPECTIVES

INTERVIEWS WITH 100
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING
UNSHELTERED
HOMELESSNESS IN PHOENIX,
ARIZONA

ASH USS

PRINCIPLE RESEARCHER
ANDRE HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

DESIGNED BY ZOE DE LEO

*This report is dedicated to the people who remain unsheltered, to people like Diana and Kenny who've passed away on the street, to people like Tony who slip through the cracks, to the people who feel forgotten.
You are not forgotten.*

ASH USS

ANDRE HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

ASH USS

Advocacy and Partnerships Coordinator

Andre House of Hospitality

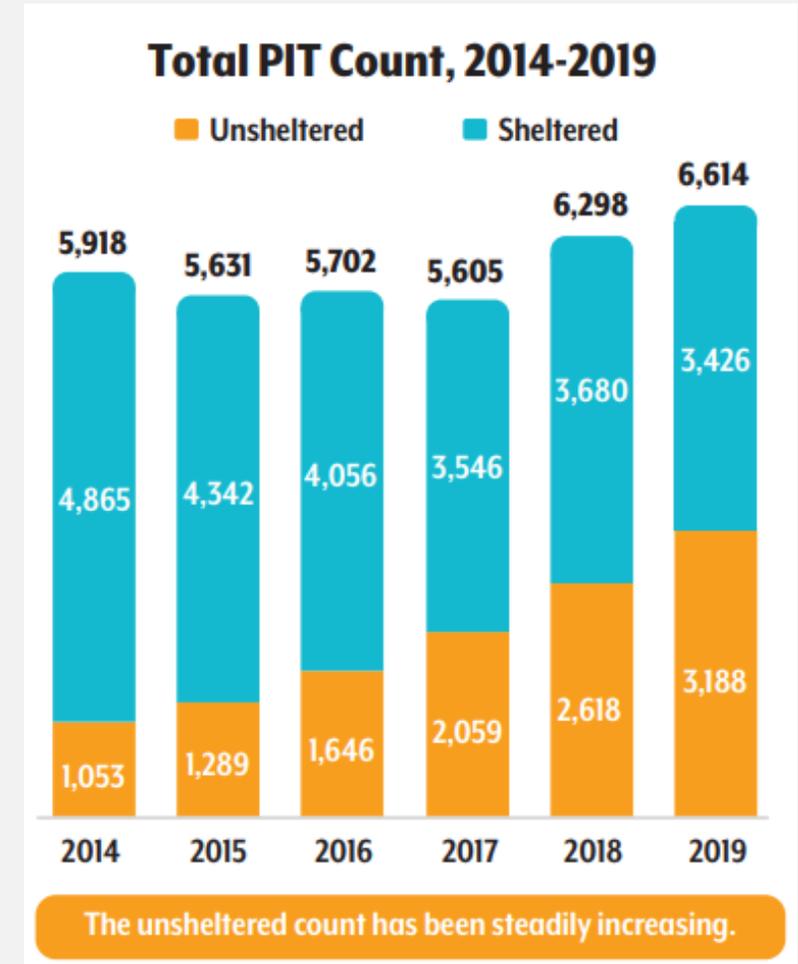
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

-Emmanuel College, Boston MA



BACKGROUND

- 45% of Andre House's dinner guests are sleeping outside
- According to HUD, anyone sleeping in a place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation is considered "unsheltered"
- Rise in unsheltered homelessness in cities across the United States
- Housing First (Tsemberis, 1993)



2019 Point-in-Time Count, Maricopa Association of Governments

OVERVIEW

- Mixed methods studying involving 100 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in downtown Phoenix
- Experience and environment conducive to qualitative research
- “The Photo Project”, Sam MacDonald
- Are people really “service-resistant”?

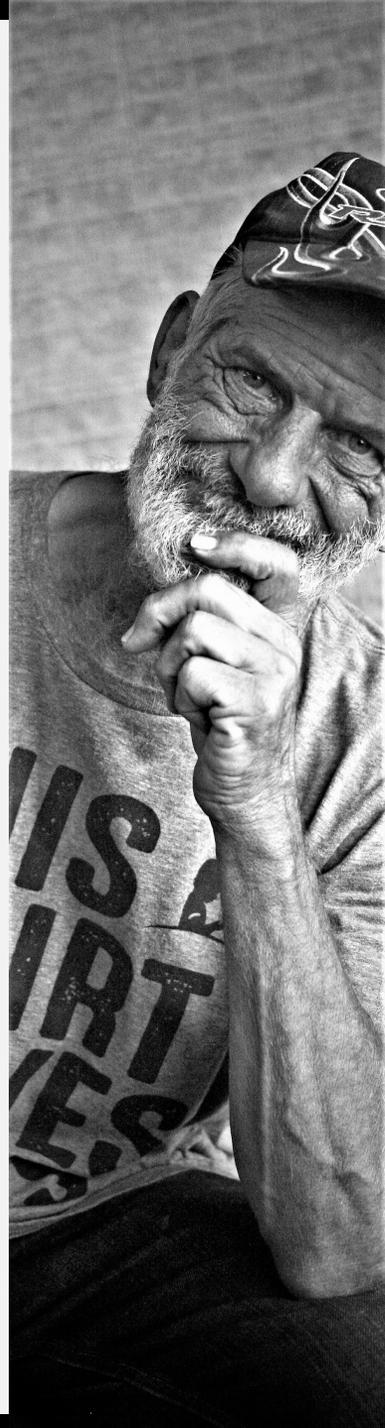


RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Are individuals labeled “service-resistant” truly resistant to services or are there barriers that make it challenging for them to access the services provided?
- What are the barriers that prevent people from utilizing shelter services and incentivize sleeping on the street?
- What are the perceived strengths and shortcomings of homeless shelter programs?

METHODS

- N=100 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness
 - \$5 giftcard to McDonald's or Jack in the Box and a backpack for participation
- Distribution of survey and semi-structured, open-ended interviews
- Transcription and data analysis using SPSS and an open-coding scheme
- Anonymous and permissible by informed consent



**TABLE 1.
DEMOGRAPHICS
OF SAMPLE**

Demographic	% in Sample, N=100	% in Maricopa County (Unsheltered Adults without Children), N=3,184
Age		
18-24 years old	4%	7.2%
25-34 years old	17%	92.8%
35-44 years old	25%	
45-54 years old	34%	
55-64 years old	18%	
65 or older	2%	
Gender		
Male	72%	73.7%
Female	27%	26%
Other	1%	Less than 1%
Race		
White	44.3%	71.2%
Black or African American	32.0%	17.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4.1%	8.7%
Asian	3.1%	Less than 1%
Native Hawaiian	3.1%	Less than 1%
Other	13.4%	1.5% of people self-reported as multi-racial
<i>*Respondents were given the option to report multiple races instead of selecting a "multi-racial" option.</i>		<i>*The Point-in-Time Count offers "multi-racial" as a selection instead of allowing respondents to select multiple races as we did in this study.</i>
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	29%	19.1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	68%	80.9%
No response	3%	N/A

FIGURE 1. SELF-REPORTED DISABLING CONDITIONS OF SAMPLE

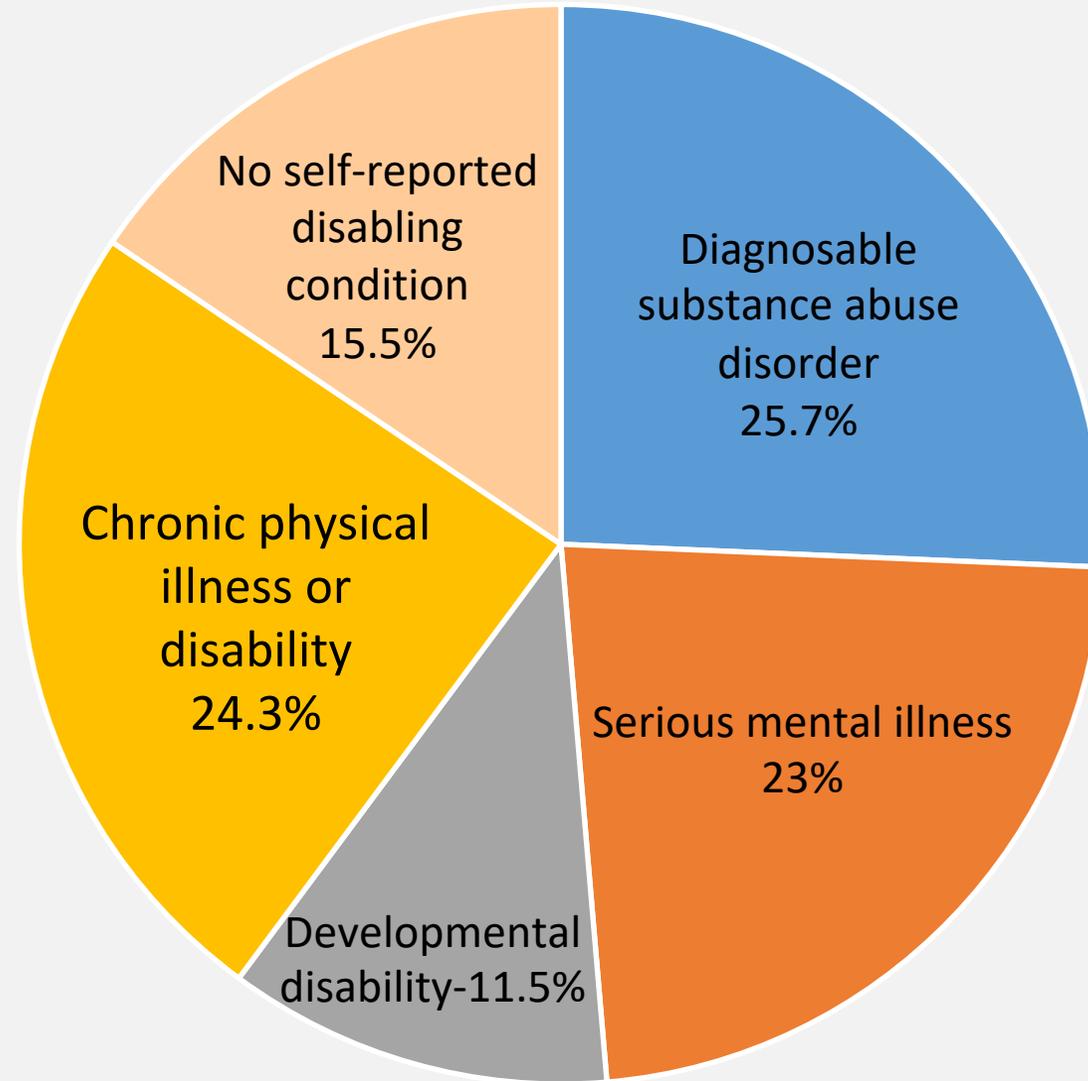


FIGURE 2. MAXIMUM LENGTH OF TIME IN SHELTER

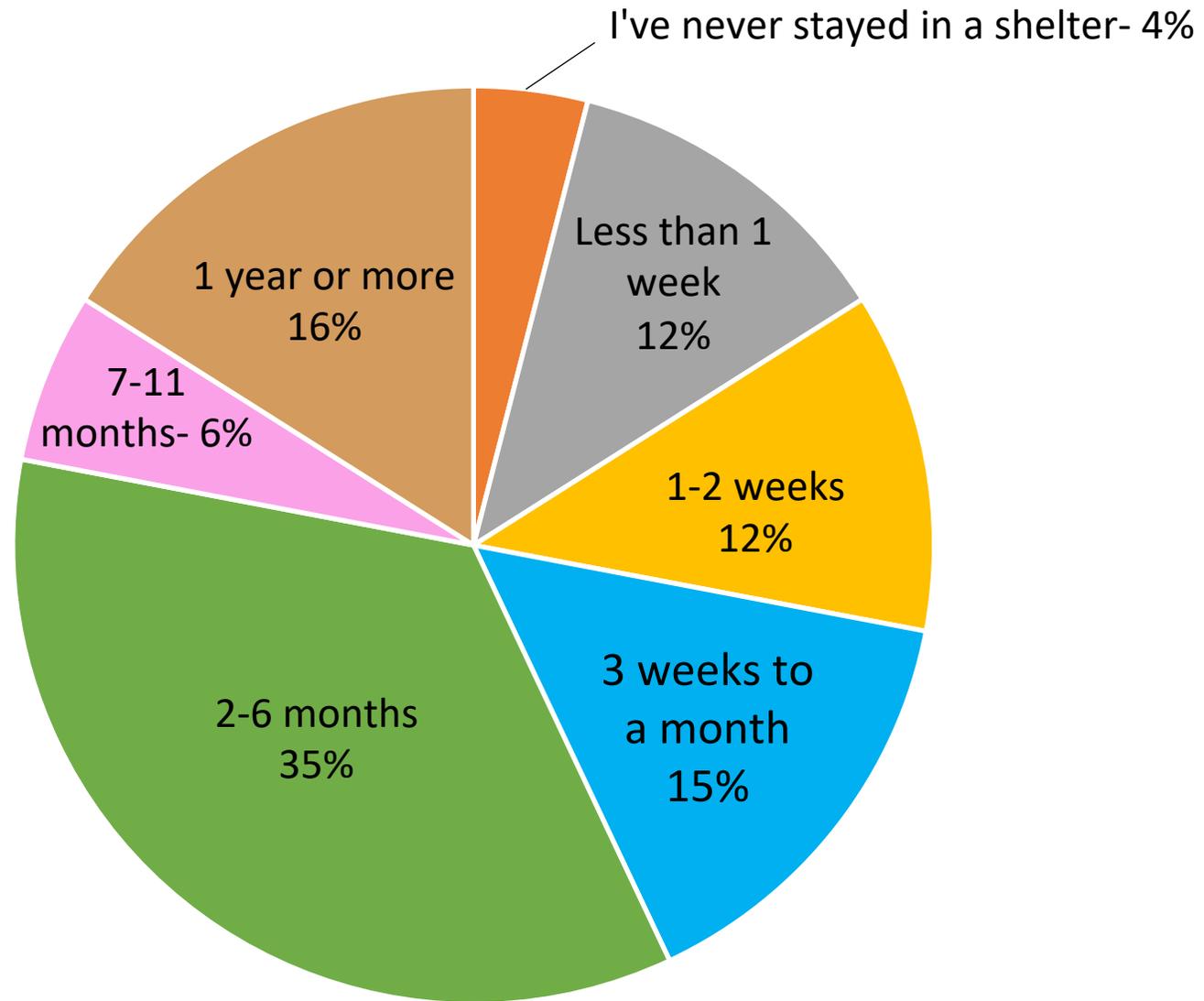
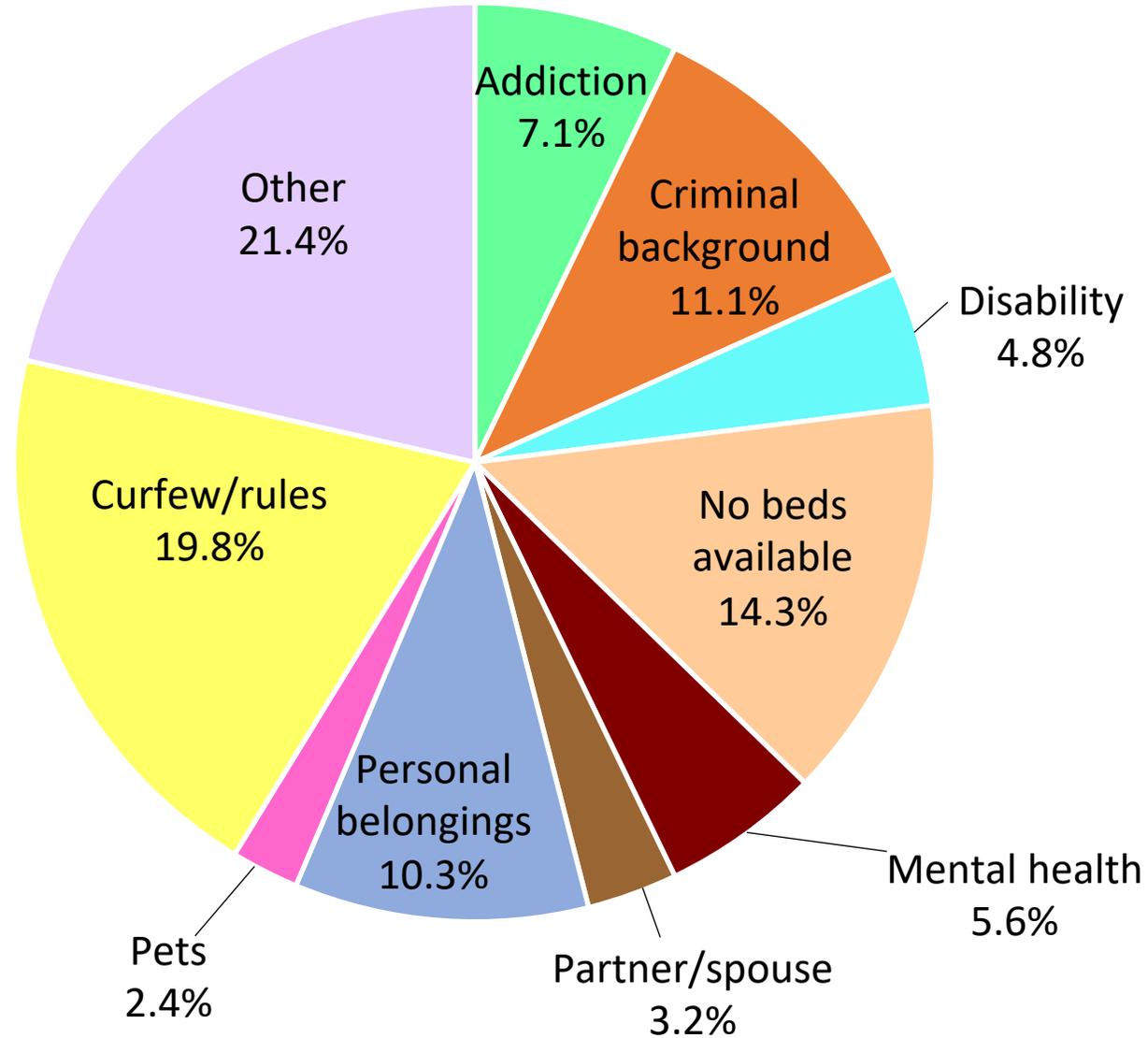


FIGURE 3. MOST SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO SHELTER ENTRY



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

- Theme 1. “Service-resistance” is a misnomer.
- Theme 2. People dislike shelters that are inhumane.
- Theme 3. People want resources to help them end their homelessness; they also want to feel safe.
- Theme 4. Community and social supports are critical.
- Theme 5. People want stability through housing and employment.

Theme 1. “Service-resistance” is a misnomer.

- 90 people said they would enter a shelter program (just 10 would not).
 - *“I’d rather be in a tent and have my own area and not be in a strange place with strange people and it’s just uncomfortable for me”- Interview 21*
- 26 people spoke about their personal belongings as a significant barrier.
 - *“They won’t even let you leave your blanket. They let you leave your bag but not your blanket but how am I supposed to go to a job interview or see about a job with a blanket?”- Interview 72*
- 52 people described how they’ve never been offered a place to stay by a service provider or case manager.

Theme 2. People dislike shelters that are inhumane.

- 29 people disliked that other shelter guests were negative influences.
 - *“There is always drugs around and the truth is, you can never get away from it and so if I don’t get treatment soon I’m just going to do it for the rest of my life because as long as I am around it, I can’t fight the urge to say no. So of course I keep saying yes and that makes it even worse”- Interview 29*
- 23 people disliked the staff in shelters they stayed in.
 - *“They weren’t really interested in anything that was going on with you or whatever. It’s like you know- lets just scan your ID, get you in. There’s your mat”-Interview 85*

Theme 2 cont'd. People dislike shelters that are inhumane.

- 22 people disliked shelters because they were dirty and unclean.
 - *“With hundreds of people being served in one little area for homelessness shelter for the night, there was only one bathroom and you know...with that many people, it’s hard to keep it clean”-Interview 20*
- 18 people spoke about over-crowding and a lack of privacy in shelters.
 - *“I won’t stay at shelters because of like open showers, showering with multiple people and being wide open with the visual of other people’s privacy being exposed”- Interview 17*
- 14 people disliked how shelters “feel like prisons”.
 - *“They were running it like a prison instead of looking at people to lift them up, rule after rule”- Interview 81*

Theme 3. People want resources to help them end their homelessness; they also want to feel safe.

- 41 people spoke about specific resources they wanted help with.
 - *“What would make me want to stay there is knowing that I’m gonna stay there and they’re gonna help me uhm move forward in my life, get on my feet”- Interview 11*
- 32 people want shelters that offer them a sense of safety and security.
 - *“My biggest thing is security. I have to be safe where I’m at. I need to know that I’m gonna be okay”-Interview 25*
 - *“Just to know you’re not gonna have issues with your bunkmates. Stealing. You know? Or rumors and the nonsense. Peace and quiet is nice”-Interview 100*

Theme 4. Community and social supports are critical.

- 41 people described their primary reason for homelessness as conflict between a family member, friend or roommate.
 - *“I experienced homelessness when my dad passed away back in 2010. After he passed away, I didn’t really have nowhere else to go. I didn’t have any other family, so”- Interview 51*
 - *“Well I turned 18 and got kicked out of my parents’ house”- Interview 83*
- 20 people described substance abuse as their reason for experiencing homelessness.
 - *“I just started to do drugs and then little by little I never went back home”-Interview 9*

Theme 5. People want stability through housing and employment.

- 59 people spoke about housing goals when asked about the future.
 - *“I just want a home. That’s all and it’s so hard. It’s really difficult and I got SSI. I got medical. I got a clean background. I just need a place”- Interview 45*
 - *“I mean that’s my immediate goal- just to get of the street. You know? A roof. Every night”- Interview 85*
- 43 people described employment as a personal goal.
 - *“I would like to make sure I’m working full time somewhere. It doesn’t matter where, as long as I’m working full time.”-Interview 25*
 - *“Well on my way back to employment. Steady employment”- Interview 81*

Other significant qualitative findings.

- 18 people said they would stay in a shelter just to avoid being outside.
- 18 people said they just wanted a comfortable place to sleep.
 - *“Some of us would just love to be able to sleep for a couple days without having to worry about the cops moving us, or without having to worry about someone hurting us, you know?”, “I’m just so tired all the time...And people want us to go out and do our housing and this that and everything else but we can’t even get sleep. Interview 22*
 - *• “I know a lot of us out here, we just want to sleep some nights. You just want a good night’s sleep. And that would just make a difference the next day.”- Interview 24*

DISCUSSION

- How do we reframe our understanding of service resistance?
- At which point in the process are people disengaging?
- Qualitative research is critical in understanding unsheltered homelessness.



RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR POLICY MAKERS

- Modify data collection measures
 - Expand on point-in-time data
 - Include qualitative data
- Invest in outreach and housing
- Increase the number of shelter beds

FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Create a culture of dignity, cleanliness and safety in homeless shelters
- Lower barriers to shelter entry
- Offer more services that assist with family reunification and sobriety

CONCLUSION

*“There’s nothing fun about sleeping outside. Period”
- Interview 5*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Zoe De Leo- ASU Watts College

Nathan Smith and the staff at the Phoenix Rescue Mission

ASU Watts College of Public Service & Community Solutions

The staff, volunteers & guests at Andre House of Hospitality



THANK YOU

Ash Uss



516-429-6427



ashu@andrihouse.org