



The Epic-Cure Almost Monthly Newsletter

April 2022

Open Invitation – if you volunteer in St. Augustine, we'd love to have you join us in Palatka, and if you volunteer in Palatka, we'd love to have you join us in St. Augustine.

From last month, but it is staying at the top to remind everyone to talk about it... It seems to be gaining a little traction and we want to build the momentum.

A few weeks ago, we were light on inventory for our Palatka distribution, so we reached out to L&M Farms to see if they could donate excess produce to help us. Of course, they stepped right up and provided five pallets of produce. In the conversation about being short food, they mentioned that truck drivers regularly have pallets of food with "integrity issues." L&M will accept the pallets and allow their employees to take what they want. The rest gets thrown away.

This topic gets top billing because we want everyone that we know to ask every truck driver that they know that, if they every have pallets of food they need to off-load, we will take it all. If it is not good to distribute, we will give it to farms to feed animals.

No Food Waste

We get a lot of pallets of food with "integrity issues." Some are not good for people, but the vast majority are. Just a few common integrity issues we have seen include: one case in the pallet being damaged; having some imperfect produce, no matter how little; produce is not the size consumers will purchase (examples we have seen are zucchini that are too large or potatoes that are too small); food that is considered too close to its use by date; or just being really dusty on top.



Operations:

Palatka Warehouse:

The **conversion to grocery store style shopping** went off without a hitch on March 18th. As always, our volunteers made it look easy. Now we are working non-stop to source more food so we can increase the number of families we can accommodate. We had to cut the appointments off **once we reached 800**. There are many more that want to sign up.

People have asked why we are not rotating families on the schedule, and the answer is the same as to why we serve the same mobile distributions locations every week. The idea is to provide ongoing, consistent support to families so they can hopefully use the money we free up by providing free groceries to catch up and get ahead and, eventually, not need us anymore. It does happen. Some families will never achieve that, especially seniors and people with disabilities, so all that we can do is make to reduce suffering from lack of nutrition or hunger.

We cannot be everywhere and help everyone but are doing as much as we can. That, we can say with conviction. Until we can help the families waiting to sign up to shop in Palatka, we have provided each a list of all the other food resources in Putnam County.

Electrical upgrade: We did the exercise with FPL on increasing the power to the building, and that is not an option. Thankfully, we found the right person at FPL with whom to connect the electrician. We have a plan to move forward with the step-up transformer and generator. The electrician knows we need to move quickly since the No Kid Hungry Grant money must be spent by the end of June. Otherwise, we must return the grant money.

St. Augustine Warehouse:

St. Johns County Commission update. Prior to the meeting of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) yesterday, April 5th, we met four of the five commissioners: Henry Dean (Chair), Sarah Arnold, Christian Whitehurst, and Jeremiah Blocker, all of whom warmly received us and considered seriously our request for the BOCC to allocate \$2.7 million of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) to purchase the Hardy Building (975 South Ponce de Leon Boulevard in St. Augustine) as a base of operations for Epic-Cure in St. Johns County. As a result of those meetings, we were cautiously optimistic about the BOCC meeting on the 5th.



While we were not yet granted any funds, our request was well received, and we have some homework to do to. To get ahead of any concerns about our sustainability as a charity and prove that we won't ask for "emergency" funds again in the future, we will provide them an economic analysis of the grant impact. To boil the economics down to the basics that Ken will illustrate in a much more "formal business plan fashion" for them:

- Our current rent is \$4,200.
- Once we purchase the property, we will move into the 1,500 square foot warehouse while we construct a 10,000 square foot warehouse.
 - So our rent goes to \$0.
- The rental income from the 5,000 square foot, Class A office space will cover the cost of the mortgage we will take out to build the warehouse.
- We will only need 4,000 square feet of the new warehouse space and can rent the other 6,000 square feet to independent tenants paying market rents.
 - All that income will help cover property taxes, insurance, and other operating costs.
- This grant creates an endowment that would make Epic-Cure self-sustaining in St. Johns County.

With this and their commitment to expediting the review of requests for the ARPA funds, we are cautiously optimistic about the outcome and our future home base.

We would like to thank Ervin Bullock of Compassionate St. Augustine and Dr. Arthur Culbert of Good Trouble for their introductions to the County Commissioners and their wise advice and expert sponsorship.

New Volunteer Opportunities: The organizers of the Blue Crab Festival that takes place over the Memorial Day Weekend are going to donate tips received at the beer stations to Epic-Cure if our volunteers will help with the event. They would like 30 each day. So, if you have some time that weekend, please sign up through the link below. Looks like it will be fun!!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4BADA92AA3FAC16-palatka>

Cooking demonstrations and giving out samples of hard to move food: Having printed recipes to go along with the lentil soup at our Thursday distribution went very well. We will make cooking demonstrations and take-away recipes into a regular weekly thing:

- Thursdays in St. Augustine and
- Fridays and Saturdays in Palatka.



Arthur Culbert, Ph.D., urban farmer and author of the children’s book “The Gift Garden,” has completed the training for the Fresh Food Connect program/app. This program facilitates taking fresh produce from community gardens and providing it to local food pantries. It has had success in other parts of the country with comprehensive support and impressive peer to peer collaboration. We are very excited to see it get off the ground, here. Dr. Culbert is currently organizing and training administrators for the program.

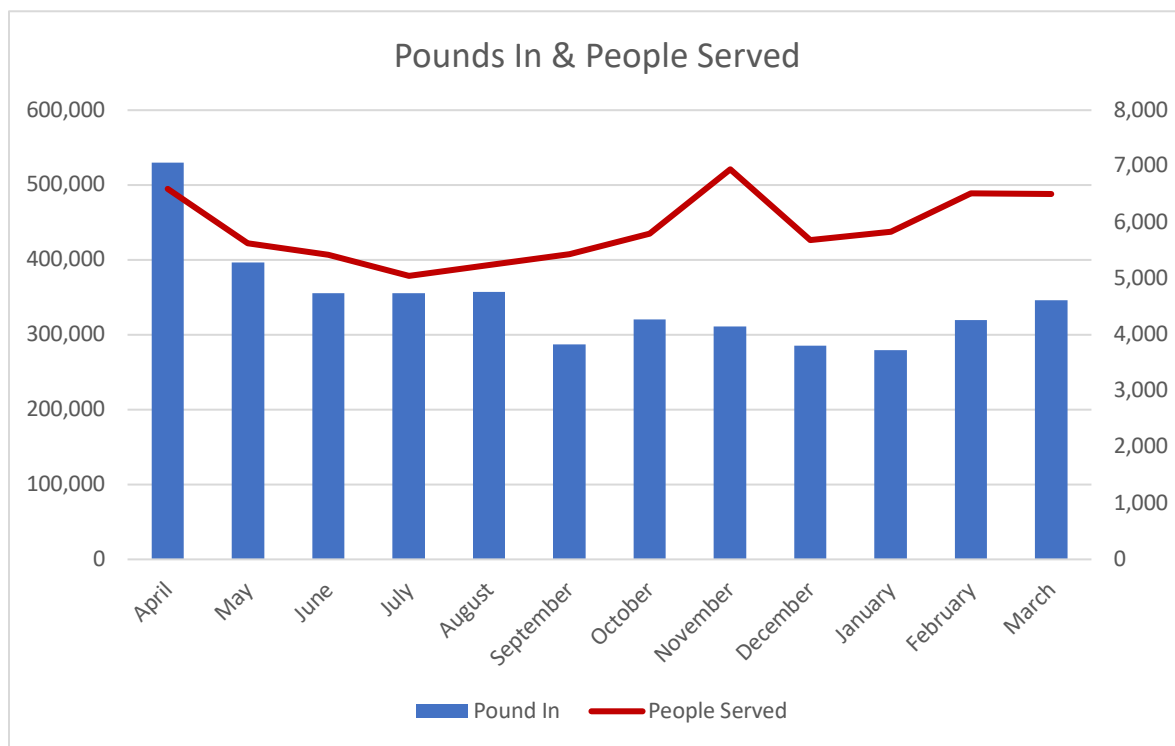
This is a great video demonstrating how the program works:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqraP6K1KK4>

We will recruit both growers and couriers, and the administrators will help them to sign up and get started.

If you are interest in becoming a courier, please email couriers@epic-cure.org and we’ll contact you once we are ready to get you registered. For growers, please email growers@epic-cure.org.

Here is our PIPS (Pounds In & People Served) graph:





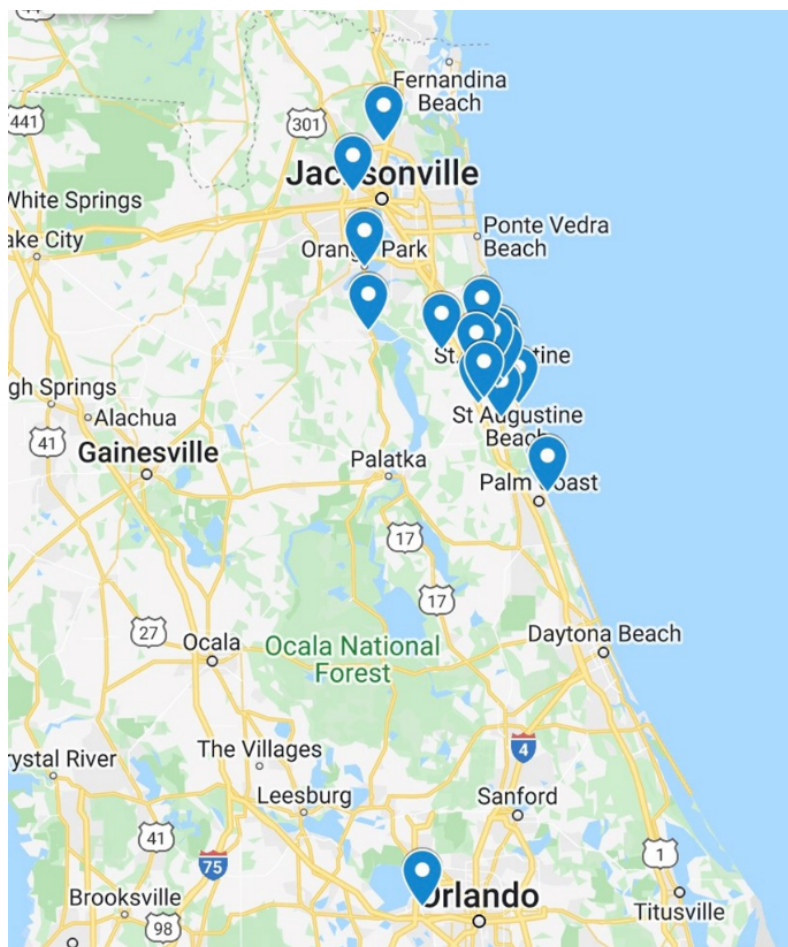
Notes on the graph:

We stayed flat on the number of families served due to the new appointment system in Palatka. As described above, we must access more food resources to increase the number of families we serve. You can see from the chart below, we have increased our intake by 66,464 pounds in the last 2 months. That just gets us up to where we need to be to adequately serve the families we have signed up.

January	279,452
February	320,028
March	345,916

How did we do it? We worked for it. We have begun weekly pickups from Farm Share and Waste Not Florida in Jacksonville and Challenge Enterprises in Green Cove Springs. We seize every pop up opportunity to pick up surplus food. You can see from the map below how far we travel to get the resources we need.

Here is the map showing how far our volunteers travel to pick up rescued and donated food for our distributions.





Sustain U.

On Wednesday, March 30th, we celebrated with our first graduating class at the Boys & Girls Club in St. Augustine. For the last 6 months, it has been a pleasure working with, and getting to know, this exceptional group of young adults. Cheers to Maria Crann, Mimi Heimsoth and Guest Chef Barry Honan - this feedback from the students is for you...

Q: What was your favorite thing about this program?

A: The teachers/chefs.

As part of this program you prepared or took home meals for your family. Please answer the following questions with that in mind.

** Note - all of the responses were the same.

Q: How important is it to you to help prepare meals for your family?

A: Extremely important.

Q: Did this program increase your desire to help prepare meals for your family?

A: Very much so.

Q: Is the work done in this program important to your family?

A: Yes

Q: Are you interested in the advanced cooking program?

A: Yes

We have some pictures of our graduates to share...









Because every child at each location has been asking to participate, and by request of the program managers at both locations, we are adapting our class structure beginning 4/4/22. This will allow us to have a broader reach while still achieving the goal of advanced skills for the ones interested in pursuing culinary careers. If you are interested in reading more, open the attachment:



New%20Cooking%20Class%20Outline.docx

We have one local restaurant downtown that is willing to give our students who wish to work and get real restaurant experience the opportunity to work there. One of our cooking class volunteers works there and will willing to help train them as well.



Grants & Fundraising:

Giving Day is coming up on May 4th and 5th. Giving Day 2022 is a 24-hour online giving event designed to empower every person to give back to their community by supporting local nonprofits and causes they care about. Please mark your calendars!!!

We have a donor that is willing to match donations we receive up to \$10,000 so we need all the help we can get spreading the word to make it a successful campaign.

You can view our profile through the link below.

<https://www.givingday2022.com/organizations/epic-cure-inc>

Amazon Smile and Epic-Cure: If you are an Amazon shopper and do not have a charity you are supporting with your purchases, please consider choosing Epic-Cure and login to Smile.Amazon.com when shopping. 1% of all purchases go to support the charity you choose.

Please consider using these Honor Cards to donate to Epic-Cure as your gift to your friends and family!

Just ask Sunny or Ken for the actual cards if you wish ...



IN HONOR OF

YOUR GIFT IS TOO BIG FOR A BOX

A donation to Epic-Cure's Sustain U children's cooking class has been made in your honor. This donation supports free culinary classes to middle school children from low income families. The children will leave the class with culinary skills and the ingredients needed to recreate the meal at home for a family of 6.



At Sustain U we teach children and veterans about nutrition, meal planning, and how to safely prepare food through cooking classes taught by senior citizen mentors and chefs.

By teaching useful and marketable life skills, we are connecting generations to improve the health and wellbeing of our seniors and providing paths to self-reliance for our Title 1 school children and our veterans- returning the favor.

We are an 100% volunteer organization, our mission is fueled by the communities donated time and funds. Thank you for your contribution.

IN HONOR OF

YOUR GIFT IS TOO BIG FOR A BOX

A donation to Epic-Cure has been made in your honor. The donation made will provide 20 families with groceries for a week.

This donation helps us to reach community members experiencing need, by providing them with the most basic necessity, food. It turns the lights on at our warehouse, powers our freezers and puts gas in our delivery trucks.

This donation feeds our community.



IN HONOR OF

YOUR GIFT IS TOO BIG FOR A BOX

A donation to Epic-Cure has been made in your honor. The donation made will provide 10 families with groceries for a week.

This donation helps us to reach community members experiencing need, by providing them with the most basic necessity, food. It turns the lights on at our warehouse, powers our freezers and puts gas in our delivery trucks.

This donation feeds our community.



IN HONOR OF

YOUR GIFT IS TOO BIG FOR A BOX

A donation to Epic-Cure has been made in your honor. The donation made will provide 3 families with groceries for a week.

This donation helps us to reach community members experiencing need, by providing them with the most basic necessity, food. It turns the lights on at our warehouse, powers our freezers and puts gas in our delivery trucks.

This donation feeds our community.



Epic-Cure is a 100% volunteer organization. Our mission to nourish our planet and its people by eliminating food waste and hunger, teaching self-sufficiency, connecting generations, and promoting individual success through accomplishment.

We rescue still good food from ending up in landfills, and redirect it to address food insecurity, ensuring that community members, regardless of income, age, and ethnicity, are nourished.

Our impact is fueled by the communities donated time and funds. Thank you for your contribution.

Scan the QR code to learn more about what we do:





Awareness:

- This is large and bold for a reason...

An easy, impactful way that you can help us is to please ...

Save And Drop Off Your Grocery Store Plastic Bags.

You will help reduce waste by allowing us to re-use them.
You will be saving us money by reducing the number we have to purchase.

Volunteering:

To hear about ongoing volunteer opportunities, please join our Facebook Volunteer Group. Charity Roberts, our volunteer coordinator, posts details about our needs every week. You can reach her at charity.roberts@epic-cure.org if you have any questions.

Anyone who wishes to see ***Epic-Cure's financial statements*** need only ask.

- Please email your requests to Sunny Mulford: sunny.mulford@epic-cure.org

Please watch the movie "Wasted: The Story of Food Waste."

You can watch it on Amazon or Netflix.

Or, you can "check out" a DVD at our warehouse.



Sticky Inflation

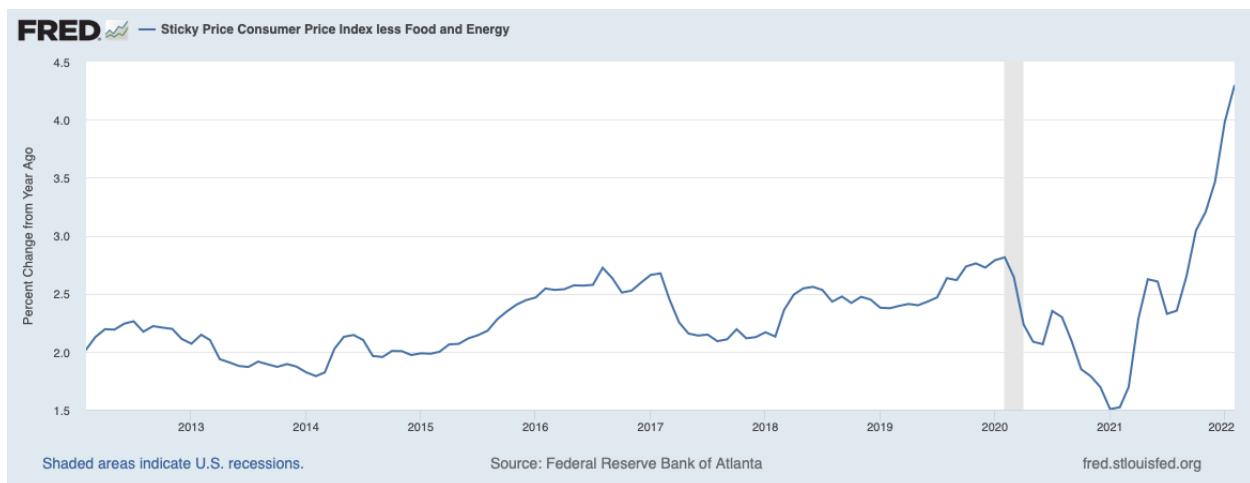
No, seriously, there is such a thing. Here is the Federal Reserve's definition and rationale for tracking Sticky Inflation. (Fear not: I will translate it into plain English.)

"The Sticky Price Consumer Price Index (CPI) is calculated from a subset of goods and services included in the CPI that change price relatively infrequently. Because these goods and services change price relatively infrequently, they are thought to incorporate expectations about future inflation to a greater degree than prices that change on a more frequent basis. One possible explanation for sticky prices could be the costs firms incur when changing price." *The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis*

Wait, what? So, here is the translation to human speak. Sticky inflation is exactly what it sounds like. It is sticky. That is, it sticks around and can stick around for a long time. The prices of the "stuff" it measures will rise, but these prices are not likely to fall in the future.

Q: Why are we serving about 1,000 more families than just three or four months ago?

A: Sticky Inflation.





Running this one again for those in need of a way to finally fall asleep: Excerpted from one of our grant applications, the following treatment of food insecurity uses newer information than we previously had available; on the other hand, it is stale (largely because so little work was accomplished during the pandemic related economic and government agency shutdown). The data are, nonetheless, illuminating.

Also, I have left the grant request in the body of this short work so you can see the kinds of things that are baking in the Epic-Cure oven.

Note: The unusual font is deliberate, as it allows me to align information in tables.

Describe the community need and support with data as relevant.

There are two dimensions to our community's need. First, in the COVID-19 pandemic era, food insecurity is magnified. Second, food waste remains a problem with a far-reaching environmental impact. While we will focus on food insecurity, it must be noted that, as food decomposes in landfills, it creates methane, a greenhouse gas that is capable of trapping 86 times more heat than carbon dioxide (International Panel on Climate Change, "Fifth Assessment Report," 2013).

Food Insecurity: According to the USDA, 89.5 percent (116.7 million) of U.S. households were food secure throughout 2020; however, 10.5 percent (13.8 million) of U.S. households were food insecure at some time during 2020. Both figures are unchanged from 2019.

A condition in which households lack consistent and sufficient access to food for a healthy, active life, food insecurity is a leading health and nutrition issue in the U.S. and in Northeast Florida. Food insecurity is caused by such socio-economic factors as: poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and low income; lack of affordable housing; lack of access to affordable childcare; chronic health conditions, disabilities, mental health issues; a lack of access to adequate healthcare; race; and stress. The impact of food insecurity on people is significant, as research shows it to be associated with increased risks of birth defects, anemia, lower nutrient intakes, cognitive problems, and aggression and anxiety. It is easy to understand the vicious cycle of food insecurity, as its effects prevent access to consistent and adequate access to food.

Food Insecurity in Our Community

Demographics: It is uncontroversial that poverty contributes to food insecurity. In fact, many of the factors that are noted above, and which contribute to food insecurity are also predictors of poverty. According to the US Census Bureau (April 1, 2020), approximately 12.9% of the population of NE Florida live in poverty. Based on this Census data, that amounts to 235,176 people in NE Florida (counties: Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval,



Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and Saint Johns). Given the in migration to our area in this COVID-19 pandemic era, it is safe to assume that the number - if not the proportion - of people in poverty has increased apace.

Race, too, is an important factor in food insecurity. According to the USDA and its 2020 data, the percentage of black non-Hispanic households facing food insecurity was 21.7% (versus 10.5% for all households), which is essentially the same proportion as in NE Florida (21.5%, according to US Census data at 4/1/2020). This implies that more than 1 in 5 black Americans suffer food insecurity in NE Florida. In Duval County, 30.8% of black households are food insecure (US Census, 4/1/2020).

USDA data for Hispanic households nationally show that 17.2% of those households are food insecure, and this proportion is 6.7 points higher than the national average.

Children: According to the USDA (2020), households with children had a substantially higher rate of food insecurity (14.8 percent) than those without children (8.8 percent). In NE Florida, 21.8% of the population is comprised of children, with the highest proportions of children occurring in Baker County (23.9%), Clay County (22.5%), Putnam County (21.2%), and St. Johns County (21.6%). Not all these children face food insecurity (the statistics do not appear to be this granular); however, it is important to note that there are significant problems that result from food insecurity. Children in food insecure families are aware of their food insecurity. In addition to this stress, these children are more likely to be hospitalized or face health concerns like asthma and anemia, repeat a grade in elementary school, have language and motor skills problems, and have problems (behavioral, social, learning) in school.

Single Head of Household: Households with children headed by a single woman (27.7 percent) or a single man (16.3 percent) face a greater than average (10.5% of households, USDA 2020) incidence of food insecurity. This phenomenon impacts these heads of household and their children.

Senior Citizens: Senior citizens who are 65 years and older number 319,311 people in NE Florida, comprising 17.52% of the population (US Census, 4/1/2020). The percentage of the population that are seniors is significantly higher than that proportion in Flagler County (31.2%), Nassau County (22.8%), Putnam County (23.7%), and St. Johns County (20.6%). According to Feeding America, 63% of seniors visiting food banks say they must choose between food and medical care. Hunger takes a severe toll on seniors' health and nutrition - putting them at risk for chronic health conditions like depression, asthma, and diabetes. These problems are compounded for seniors who identify as Black or Latino, seniors who live in rural areas, seniors with disabilities, and seniors who are renters.

It is evident from the data above that there is immense need in NE Florida for eliminating food insecurity. The populations at risk, and the multifaceted nature of that risk, are described above and enumerated here for the NE Florida counties of Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau,



Putnam, and St. Johns. Each of these categories represent heightened health and other risks dues to food insecurity.

US Census Data as of 4/1/2020:

Total Population:	1,822,850
Persons Under 18:	398,000
Persons 65+:	319,311
Black/African American(only):	392,920
American Indian/Alaska Native (only):	25,491
Hispanic or Latino (only):	182,227
Veterans:	160,061
Persons With Disability (under 65):	172,238
Persons Without Health Insurance (Under 65):	248,862
Persons in Poverty:	235,176

Please note that, because some people share more than one of the characteristics in this table, the sum of the various categories of people is greater than the total population.

Inflation:

Inflation is currently running at a 40 year high. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1/7/2022) (emphasis added):

"Prices for food at home rose 7.4 percent over the last 12 months. All of the six major grocery store food groups increased over the period. By far the **largest increase was that of meats, poultry, fish, and eggs, which rose 12.2 percent over the year.** Prices for dairy and related products increased 3.1 percent, the smallest 12-month increase among in the food at home category.

Prices for food away from home rose 6.4 percent over the last year, the largest 12-month increase since January 1982.

Within the energy category, **gasoline prices rose 40.0 percent** over the last year, despite declining in January. Prices for natural gas rose 23.9 percent over the last 12 months, and **prices for electricity rose 10.7 percent."**

Inflation is making the problem of food insecurity even greater than we have experienced so far. Specifically, many of the components of the Consumer Price Index that are rising the most are at the same time the most fundamental household expenses that all families must pay. Here is a list of all the items that saw year over year price increases that were greater than the 7.5% increase in all items from January 2021 to January 2022 (BLS, 1/7/2022):



Expense Category	Percent Increase
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	12.2%
Energy commodities	39.9%
Fuel oil	46.5%
Motor fuel	40.0%
Gasoline (all types)	40.0%
Energy services	13.6%
Electricity	10.7%
Utility (piped) gas service	23.9%
New vehicles	12.2%
Used vehicles	40.5%

With less money to spend on food (due to spending more for essentials like electricity and gasoline) and with higher prices for essential food items, it is incontrovertibly the case that food insecurity - and human suffering - must rise here in NE Florida.

Describe the project to include original objectives, goals, and expected outcomes.

The Project: Purchase a food truck to, in partnership with Flagler Health's Plus Bus (mobile clinic), conduct mobile cooking classes for single mothers with children across NE Florida, particularly in remote, rural areas and among migrant worker populations.

- The cost of the food truck is estimated to be \$65,000.
- The request for funds from the Rotary Area 12 Grant is \$32,000.

Epic-Cure is seeking other grant partners to complete the purchase but will rely on the Founders of Epic-Cure to make up any difference, whether additional grants are forthcoming or not.

Epic-Cure would use the food truck to not only provide healthy, prepared food to single mothers and migrant workers but also to teach them to plan and safely prepare healthful food for their families. These cooking classes will emphasize healthful food as medicine and will be geared not only to high nutritional value food preparation but also creating meals designed to combat health problems like diabetes or heart disease, conditions all too common among our patrons. The emphasis will be on quick, economical meals using nutritious ingredient, including the food that Epic-Cure would provide to them at these distribution points.

Additionally, Epic-Cure will work with Flagler Care Connect to coordinate the availability of its mobile medical clinic, the Plus Bus, to further ensure healthy outcomes for these patrons.

It is important to note that, while the single mother and migrant worker populations will be the primary target of this program, we will not limit access to them.



Project Background: Epic-Cure operates between 16 and 18 weekly distributions of food to the food insecure in St. Johns, Putnam, and Duval counties. Our base of operations consists of two warehouse locations, one in St. Johns County (2745 Industry Center Road, Units 1 and 2) and the other in Palatka (389 N US 17). The Palatka distribution center is a 15,000 square foot warehouse with eight bays, a 40 foot by 40 foot walk-in refrigeration unit, and three refrigerated sea containers that are freezers with the capacity to cool to -10 degrees Fahrenheit. Based on the average number of patrons served from October 2021 to December 2021, Epic-Cure serves about 1,470 families a week (about 4,260 people per week) from these facilities and in mobile distributions in NE Florida.

As many of our patrons face mobility challenges (17% were individuals with disabilities and 26% were senior citizens) and most are low-income earners, Epic-Cure's Board made the decision early to extend our reach into targeted communities through mobile distributions. Single mothers face challenges that have also invited us to increase our reach and the frequency of food distributions. Day care needs, service industry jobs with irregular shifts, and second jobs make it difficult for them to find the time to avail themselves of food pantry assistance. These challenges force poor food choices, including fast food and other highly processed and materially less nutritious food than is optimal for their children's health, among single mothers who face mighty challenges to care for their children. Thus, 14 to 16 of our distributions are regularly conducted away from our two main warehouse centers, directly in low income and rural communities, increasing the frequency of free food availability while decreasing the costs (time and money) of accessing this vital resource.

Goals and Objectives: The goal of this program is to materially extend Epic-Cure's reach into the targeted communities, provide healthful food and food preparation instruction, and combine these efforts with Flagler Care Connect's Plus Bus mobile clinic to round out the instruction and implementation of healthy choices and good health outcomes.

Expected Outcomes: With the Epic-Cure Food Truck, we expect to increase our relevant patronage by 30% or more. While we do not track gender or marital status statistics (we are prevented from doing so under the terms of our contract with the USDA, a major supplier of the food we distribute), we estimate that 66.7% or more of our patrons between the ages of 18 and 60 are single mothers. This estimate also excludes individuals with disabilities. We expect that more frequent and widely distributed mobile distributions will make our food and educational opportunities available to a wider audience of single mothers.

While somewhat seasonal, the migrant worker population that we will serve will increase in higher proportion; however, an estimate of that need is necessarily difficult to come by. Very little information is gathered on this "invisible" population. In any case, it is safe to say that we will increase our connections with this population by orders of magnitude.



The following table describes Epic-Cure's Current patronage according to the categories that we track. It also shows our expected results from employing the food truck in conjunction with the Flagler Care Connect Plus Bus program. The values in the table for Historical Experience and Expected Outcomes are the number of time that each constituent group has been served in the past year (2021).

Historical Experience		Expected Outcomes	
Category	Times Served (yr.)	20% Increase	Times Served (yr.)
Adults	39,502	20% *	47,402
Children	64,710	20% **	77,652
Seniors (60+)	54,594	0%	54,594
Disabled	34,582	0%	34,583
Veterans/Military	12,880	0%	12,880
Total	206,268		227,111
Net Increase			20,843

* Adults represent non-senior and non-disabled individuals. We estimate that two-thirds of these individuals are single mothers, based on observation.

** Though the figure is, based on observation, probably greater, we apply the same growth factor to the expected outcome for children, yielding 66.7% of the expected 30% expected growth.

In short, we expect to increase the number of times that single mothers and their children are served by about 21,000 times in the first year after implementing the food truck program. To be sure, our estimate here is, on our view, conservative, as we are basing it on the current footprint of our distributions; however, once the mobility of the food truck is introduced and the number of mobile distributions follows suit serving counties the Epic-Cure either does not serve or in which it has yet to maximize service (Baker, Bradford, Clay, Flagler, and Nassau), the population of single mothers and their families will grow. Additionally, and in the name of conservatism, we have not accounted for the impact on these numbers of the large number of migrant families that we will be equipped to serve, as the mobility of the program - i.e., its accessibility in remote and rural areas - finds further reaches.