



The Almost Monthly Epic-Cure Newsletter

December 2022

Christmas is coming: We'd love for any businesses that are willing and able to do toy drives for us. We currently serve about 1600 children each week so any help we can get with making their holiday special would be appreciated.

The Epic-Cure Report Card		
Life to Date <i>(since May 24, 2019)</i>		
Pounds In/Out	12,363,673	
Wholesale Value	\$ 21,160,907	
Pounds per Family	62	<i>Average pounds per family per visit</i>
Total Number of Meals	10,303,061	<i>Assumes 1.2 pounds per meal</i>
November 2022		
Number of Families per Week	1,911	
Number of Distributions per Week	20	



Fundraising

If you are still in need of Christmas gifts, you can make your shopping easy and impactful by purchasing **Honor Cards** that help support feeding families in need in our community. All purchases should be 100% tax deductible (please consult your tax advisor).

Please email your orders to [Epic-Cure Support](#).

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.   	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 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'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.   

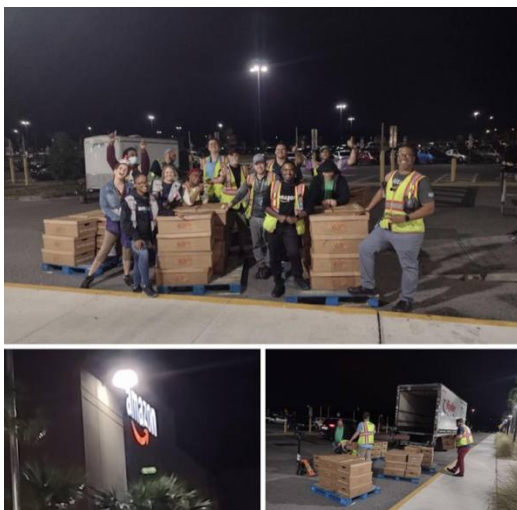


Operations

- A big thank you to **Ameris Bank** on Anastasia Island, **Bartram Trail Cheerleading Squad**, and **Ketterlinus Elementary Early Act Club** for doing Thanksgiving food drives for us making the holidays more special for families in need in our community! Unfortunately, we didn't get a picture of the display Ameris Bank had set up. This is the 3rd year in a row they have done this for us, and we really appreciate their continued support!



- Part of the plan for the Palatka warehouse has always been to use both refrigerated and dry storage space to assist other charities and we are pleased that we are accomplishing that part of the plan. In November, we were able to store over 300 turkeys for Malinda Peoples at the Sea Community. We brought those with a load of sweet potatoes to their distribution on 11/18. We are storing another 200 turkeys for Sea Community for their Christmas distribution.
- Currently, we are storing a LOT of toys and bikes for Sheila McCoy at the Palatka Christian Service Center to give out at Christmas.
- A sincere thank you to the employees of Amazon in Jacksonville for helping us feed Putnam County. They over-ordered catering from Cracker Barrel for their holiday parties and were determined not to let it go to waste. On Tuesday, all the food donated went to 3 soup kitchens. Organized by one of our team leaders, Trinisha Austin, the food donated Saturday went to Johnson Temple Cogie to feed 380 people in Crescent City on Sunday.
- P.S. Thank you to our driving team Army and Paul for doing pickups at 11 pm to rescue that food.



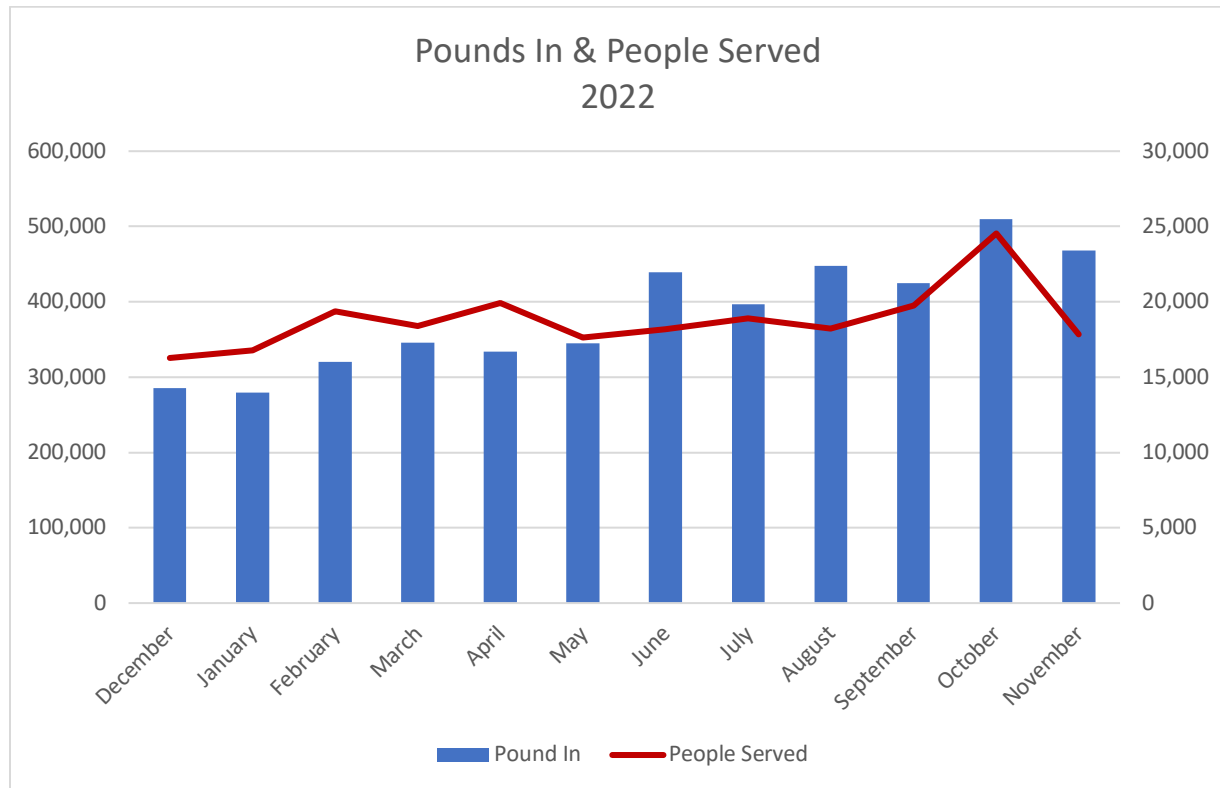
- NEW DISTRIBUTION:** We added a **new distribution in Lincolnville**. Every other Wednesday, this Epic-Cure distribution is managed by the wonderful people at the St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church located at 86 ML King Avenue, St. Augustine, FL 32084

Latest interview with Sunny on the **904 Now** can be viewed through this link:

[Sunny on the 904 Now!](#)



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



Notes on the graph:

Hurricanes and holidays disrupted our supply chain and distributions in December.

Sustain U.

A note from the management company at Woodlawn Terrace:

“I am excited about the upcoming cooking class and continued partnership with Epic-Cure. Being able to provide this program to the residents helps increase their quality of life and brings joy to the property.”



Volunteer Spotlight

By Janet McNabb



Charles Ross

To say that Charles likes to keep busy would be an understatement. He enjoys acting, sports, and volunteering, but not necessarily in that order.

Listening to him speak, one would not guess that he was born in Detroit. He has an accent that is hard to place because he spent very little time there, and immediately started roaming the world. A military career kept him moving all over Europe and the Middle East. He claims that his average stay in one place seems to be about two and a half years. In the military, he started out in

Aircraft Armament System repair but was soon moved to Human Resources “when they found out that I could read and write”. His military career lasted 26 years, 7 months, 16 days, 11 hours, 18 minutes, and 10 seconds.

Over the years and since his retirement, he has enjoyed taking university courses that interest him, probably, he says, enough for a liberal arts degree, but doesn’t feel the need to pursue it. He was involved in a college Model United Nations type event, called the Midwest Model Arab League, where students from each college represented an Arab country; he chose to represent Jordan since he had spent some time in Israel and had some experience with their neighbors.

He has participated in the theater in many places over the years. While in the military, he was in plays all over Germany, either acting or building sets. In one tournament competition, he was pleased to be nominated for a Best Supporting Actor award. Locally, he has acted in plays at the Limelight Theater, First Coast Opera, Flagler Playhouse in Bunnell, and the River City Players in Palatka. Currently he constructs the sets for the plays at the Limelight. They had a play planned, “A Flea in Her Ear”, and were all set to perform when Covid hit. They continued with Zoom rehearsals, but the play was never performed. Instead, at the end of that year, they set up a display of the Director’s notes and had mannequins with their costumes in the lobby, and the actors walked through some scenes while running dialogue. Then they had a Question-and-Answer session with an audience, with everyone wearing masks. It was a way to show their patrons how a performance is developed.

Throughout the years, he has worked at volunteering wherever he happened to be, whether it was with food pantries, hospitals, or working with homes for abused kids. Locally, his schedule is something like this: Monday - SEA Community Food Pantry; Tuesday - Epic-Cure warehouse and home deliveries; Friday - the ER at Flagler Hospital; every other Saturday - Anastasia Baptist Church and Flagler Hospital food distributions.

He found Epic-Cure through the local volunteer website. Sunny’s comments are that he is a very hard worker, super organized, usually last to leave, willing to be on call at any hour, and always diligent.

Charles’ comment is that he is here for “heavy lifting and light entertainment”.

We are so pleased to have you working with us, Charles. We hope that you’ll stay much longer than your two and a half year average. Thank you for all you 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 save us money by reducing the number we have to purchase.

Transparency:

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

- Our CPA-Audited fiscal year 2021 financial statements have been released and are available upon request.
- Please email your requests to Sunny Mulford: sunny.mulford@epic-cure.org

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.

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 [Amazon Smile](#) when shopping. One percent (1%) of all purchases goes to support the charity you choose.



Chapter 2 – Geopolitics of Food

Russia – the Former Superpower

At the risk of understatement, Russia has been in the news. Its war with Ukraine has implications for the supply of food to the world. And, it is a part of a larger sweep of Russia's history, demography, geography, and resources, all of which are relevant to food, energy, and our wellbeing. Let's start with some context.

At its height, Russia – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – was the largest country in the world. It was the third largest empire ever. Its technical achievements in physics, chemistry, biology, rocketry, aerospace, and mathematics were outstanding, pressing the limits of those disciplines. Its military intimidated the world, and only the American Order kept it in check. But now, Russia's infrastructure is crumbling, its political structure is petrifying, and its people are dying. It is a failed Superpower. Let's dig in.

Geography

Russian rivers are not particularly useful. Most are not navigable, and those few that are wind through unproductive and useless terrain, draining into seas in remote and unpopulated regions of the country. Most Russian rivers flow north. During Russia's long, harsh winters, they flow up and into already partially frozen waters, pushing more ice into those waters. This ice accumulates and forms ice dams which, in turn, force semi-frozen water up and over the riverbanks, soaking the land. During the Spring thaw, these northward flowing rivers swell, further flooding the riverbanks. The land along these rivers – land that should be well suited to agriculture – turns to deadly bogs. (An interesting aside: Russian fighter jet pilots bomb the ice dams to break them up, competing to see who breaks through to get the water flowing again.)





As Russia has no weather-moderating sea on its North and Northwest borders, most Russian lands are arid in the summer and frigid in the winter. The size of this arid, unworkable land is about the size of the United States. Flooding rivers and droughts create remarkable swarms of locusts. Arid, hot summers yield large scale fires. These problems have loomed large for Russia's wheat farmers. Prior to industrialization, all Russian farming was subsistence farming, and transportation constraints (lack of navigable rivers and pre-industrial modes of transportation) meant that the thinly spread population of Russia could create no economies of scale in agriculture. Enter Joseph Stalin: he forced the issue.

Stalin and Industrialization



Born in Gori, Georgia, in 1878, Stalin led the Soviet empire from 1924 until his death in 1953. Stalin ruled the USSR as a dictator. He is best known for transforming the country from an agrarian peasant society into an industrialized superpower. His achievement is not without stain: British historian Simon S. Montefiore believes that Stalin was responsible for the deaths of at least 20 million people.

Stalin forced the relocation of masses of Soviet citizens from farms spread widely across the countryside to small apartments near pop-up factories. This forced relocation meant that the USSR was able to industrialize. This industrialization was costly.

It gouged the demographic structure of the country. Taking people off the farm and shoehorning them into small, cramped apartments reduced the birthrate. Add the deaths of 26 million men (not inconsequential to reproduction) during World Wars I and II, and the birth rate in the Soviet Union dropped even more.

Stalin saw the output of newer and more industrialized farms, those that received new equipment like tractors, combines, and balers, as no longer the bounty of the farmers but rather as bounty for the State. The Soviet government confiscated agricultural goods to support factory workers. What were the results? Predictably, with no hope of prosperity, farmers quit trying to grow any surpluses, instead growing just enough for their own families. In response, the state confiscated all agricultural output. This action led to famine in the early 1930's in Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, the Volga region, Kazakhstan, the South Urals, and West Siberia, in which an estimated six or more million people starved to death.

The Fall of a Superpower

With the end of the Cold War in late 1991, the USSR failed. The government collapsed, and nearly all government services were suspended. Military personnel moonlighted as drug smugglers feeding a



growing heroin problem that kept pace with widespread alcoholism. Healthcare ceased, and Russia confronted HIV and Tuberculosis epidemics. Simultaneously, birth rates reduced, and death rates grew. Today in Russia, there are more 60-year-olds than 50-year-olds; more 50-year-olds than 40-year-olds; more 40-year-olds than 30-year-olds; and more 30-year-olds than 20-year-olds. This demographic decline has serious implications for Russia's ability to sustain itself as fewer working aged people are available to produce goods and services, including agricultural output.

The years following the fall of the Soviet empire saw few or no governmental restrictions on travel or restrictions on where people could live (hallmarks of the Soviet era). So, people moved to the secondary cities and to Moscow where there were some services. So many moved to cities that, since 1990, more than 11,000 small towns were completely abandoned. Importantly, in small apartments in the cities, birthrates declined.

Centralized Systems

Centralized systems like that of the USSR can be effective. Simple and direct initiatives like building roads, bridges, airports, ports, and rail lines have the full and immediate support of the state behind them. The projects get done more quickly than in decentralized (capitalist) systems that are governed by laws protecting the interests of the many competing constituents of the system. With no government force making it happen, progress can be constrained. So, a centralized system of governance can be good ... if it does not make mistakes. And many were the mistakes made by the Soviet Union's central planners.

We have already touched on the famine and mass deaths that accompanied Stalin's collectivization of the countryside. Stalin's breakneck industrialization wasted vast resources to produce subpar products. There were also severe shortages of these products, as different factories producing individual components of a final product did not benefit from any communication from planners or the other factories with respect to the quantity or quality of what was needed to produce the final product. Tractors and cars rarely lasted long – if they even worked at all.





Nikita Khrushchev became the Soviet leader upon Stalin's death in 1953 and ruled until 1964. He attempted to create housing for all Soviet citizens, building "Khrushchyovkas," typically three- to five-story apartment buildings. These Khrushchyovkas had apartments so terribly small that they contributed to reducing birthrates in the USSR by as much as World War II did.



Because of his economic failures (not to mention his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis), Khrushchev was, at the urging of Leonid Brezhnev, deposed by the Politburo (the highest authority of the Communist Party in the USSR) in 1964. Leonid Brezhnev replaced him (surprised?) and fared little better: under Brezhnev, the Soviet birthrate halved as civilian services deteriorated alongside living conditions. Disease rose due to a deteriorating healthcare system, increasing the death rate. Small living space and increasing homelessness contributed to lower birthrates, too. His top-down, statist, and inflexible rule ushered in the "Brezhnev Stagnation," a term coined by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Blamed largely for the "Brezhnev Stagnation," Brezhnev was removed from power in 1982. But the Soviet empire was unwinding rapidly. Brezhnev's successor Yuri Andropov ruled only from 1982 to 1984. Constantin Chernenko ruled from 1984 to 1985 and was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev, the ruler who presided over the actual fall of the Soviet empire in 1991.

As early as the 1970s, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev had all come to believe that the Soviet Union had lost the Cold War. They focused on managing defeat with honor. Unfortunately, with the high turnover at the top, there were few potential leaders, post collapse. And since only the intelligence services had a broad and deep enough view of Russian society (yes, they spied on their own, a terrible





trick we must now contend with) ... Putin. But first there was Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first president. Yeltsin served two terms as President, resigning shortly before the third term election, the election that brought Putin to power. Yeltsin oversaw the looting of the Russian economy by the oligarchs. As a result, he grew to be unpopular.

Vladimir Putin



Putin has effectively ruled Russia from May 2000 until today. Dmitry Medvedev, a close ally (puppet?) of Putin served as President from 2008 to 2012, during which time Putin served as Russia's Prime Minister. He has had some success. After the unstable years of Yeltsin's presidency, Putin stabilized Russia and rebuilt a healthcare system that nudged birthrates up and deathrates down, if marginally, off dreadful lows. He coopted the Russian Oligarchs, the businessmen that accumulated billions in the privatization of Soviet state assets.

There were problems, too. Education collapsed. The average age of death for men dropped into the sixties. Many younger, more skilled men emigrated from Russia.

And then Putin's Russia invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine (2014-15). The subsequent sanctions imposed by the West dealt a further blow to Russia and its aging demographics and hope for prosperity. These forces are among the factors shaping Russian actions in 2022. Before we get to that, let's address the challenges that Putin and Russia find most compelling.

Challenge #1 – Size: The Biggest Challenge

Russia is vast. It has expansive tracts of low- to moderate- productivity land stretching over 11 time zones with few navigable waterways.

Challenge #2 – Insecurity: Interlocking Problems After the Soviet Breakup

Alignments: Russia lost the former satellite states in Central Europe. It also lost the constituent republics of the USSR itself. Within 20 years, all the former Soviet Empire became part of the European Union and – especially frighteningly to Russia – the multinational security alliance constructed to militarily oppose Russia, NATO.

Borders: Russia has irregular boundaries. Its borders are difficult to defend, especially from the west. And Russia lost most of its Baltic frontage to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, all members of NATO.



Manpower: Between its shrinking demography and the loss of the former Soviet territories (much of it to NATO), Russian insecurity is high where manpower is low. Rising disease and drug addiction rates add to the bad news for Russia. The upshot is that the number of fighting aged people that Russia can employ to defend itself is down to about one-fifth of its 1989 level. Its army is less than half of its size in 2016. Defend their borders?

Technology: Due to manpower (labor) shortages, Russia must prioritize that which it must maintain. More, it cannot both develop new military technologies and produce them in sufficient quantities. As a workaround, it tried to sell its older military tech to China, hoping for recurring sales to fund new military tech. The results were unsatisfying: China reverse engineered the weapons and started domestic production of it could figure out. Russia does have some weapons systems successes. Their fifth-generation fighter jet, the SU 57, is frighteningly advanced. But bottlenecks have hindered production of the fighters, and the Russians have very few squadrons of the jets.



There is a lot at stake. When you add demographic collapse to technology bottlenecks and indefensible borders, the only viable response to invasion is using nuclear weapons.

For contemporary Russia, the Americans' abandonment of the Order has been detrimental. Given demographic and educational constraints, Russia is trapped as a commodities producer and exporter.



Oil, natural gas, coal, wheat, copper, fertilizers: transit is primarily by sea or through third parties; however, the oceans are increasingly unsafe given the increasing absence of the Americans. So, with the Americans out, Russia's capacity to generate capital through trade is diminished.

All of Russia's traditional enemies still exist. Notwithstanding recent alliances (insecurity makes for strange bedfellows), the list is long: Japan, China, Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey, France, Poland, Germany, the UK, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. With the American Order's shrinking, all these nations will need to develop and use their own tools of state: intelligence and military power.

Returning to Borders ...



Russia is obsessed with security, and it seems that its only viable option is to get new borders. That happens only after successful invasions.

Russia's borders are longer now than its USSR border. It shares its Siberian border with China and Mongolia. This section of Russia is populated with people that are culturally and ethnically Asian. In



other words, they are not Russian, ethnically, and there is only one transportation link to them: the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Damaging that railroad would cut Russia completely off from Siberia. When it comes to invasion, at least distance favors Russia. But when it comes to China, all these elements add up to but one recourse for Russia should China turn belligerent again: nuclear weapons.

The southern borders give Russia some good news. The Caucasus Mountains are a formidable barrier for its defense. The neighbors to the south pose little threat to Russia; however, the populations along the northern side of the Caucasus Mountain range are a different story, particularly the Chechens.

Russia's Border with the West: The Primary Concern



The Russians view the western horizon as a single, continuous battlespace. In the North near St. Petersburg are Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Moving southward, Belarus sits between Poland (a Russian target) and Russia. Moving further to the South, next is Ukraine, the country Russia was always going to invade. And finally, there is Moldova.

The Western fronts have been Russia's most painful. The Swedes had raped and pillaged through Russian lands for centuries. The Ottomans raided Russia without recourse, also for centuries. And of course, there is the case of the Germans who started two world wars.



The Russians are thinking big. Their belief is that it is easy to resolve their Western border issue. By occupying and absorbing each country on its immediate border (but for Finland), the Russians could set their power along the three barriers of the Baltic Sea, the Carpathian Mountains, and the Black Sea. Taking over the eastern half of Poland, Russia's Western frontier would shrink by approximately 75%. This border would be a line that the Russian army believes it can hold, freeing personnel to manage Russia's rising internal problems.

Conclusion

We will consider the ramifications for food (and energy, which is intimately linked) of the Ukraine war. But for now, suffice it to say that Russia is an aging, insecure, former superpower determined to make a last stand before it cannot do so. A look at the NATO member countries map below tells the story.

