



The Almost Monthly Epic-Cure® Newsletter

The Report Card

The Epic-Cure Report Card as of May 31, 2025		
Life to Date (since May 24, 2019)		
Pounds In/Out	33,490,023	
Wholesale Value of Food Distributed	\$67,575,103	
Pounds of Food per Family:	109.00	<i>Average pounds per family per visit</i>
Equivalent Meals Served:	27,908,353	<i>Assumes 1.2 pounds per meal</i>
Families Served		
Number of Families Served this month:	7,518	<i>in Month of May 2025</i>
Number of Distributions this month:	71	<i>in Month of May 2025</i>
Pounds of Food/Household Goods		
Total Pounds In / Out:	1,277,903	<i>in Month of May 2025</i>
Total Pounds In / Out:	877,037	<i>Average of 3 prior months</i>
Operating Efficiency		
Wholesale value of food distributed for each \$1.00 spent on Operations since inception:		\$42.94
Wholesale value of food distributed for each \$1.00 spent on Operations in April:		\$77.67

Gratitude at the Core of Every Accomplishment

Every pallet moved, every family fed, every new milestone reached—none of it would be possible without you.

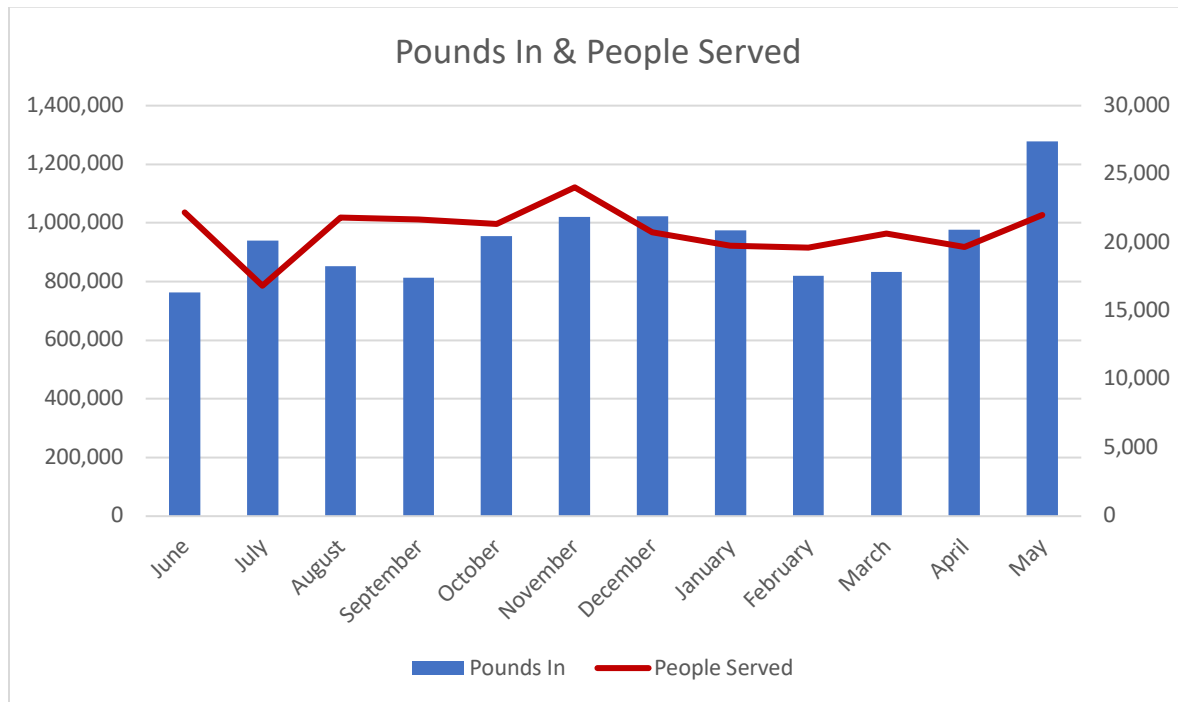
This month, as we reflect on all that Epic-Cure has accomplished, we dedicate every bit of progress to our incredible donors and volunteers. Your time, your generosity, your belief in our mission—that is what fuels us.

In the face of growing need and constant change, your unwavering support is the reason we not only survive but grow. You've helped us turn challenges into opportunities and compassion into action.

Thank you for being the heart of Epic-Cure. Everything we have done – and everything we will do – starts and ends with you.



Here is our PIPS (Pounds In & People Served) Graph



Notes on the graph: 506,747 pounds of produce in May, 112,691 of which was potatoes. We set a record for our food bank operations at 474,410 pounds shared with other agencies. It takes about 600,000 pounds for us to supply our direct-to-the-public distributions, and we share the rest.



Upcoming Fundraisers

Shine A Light on Epic-Cure 5K Run: Saturday, October 11th



Registration is open for the 4th Annual 2025 Shine a Light 5K run! This year's event will take place on October 11th.

Family friendly scenic 3.1 mile Anastasia State Park certified course and surrounding quiet, shaded neighborhoods. Start/Finish Line: Anastasia Church located at 1650 A1A South.

Whether you are an experienced runner or just starting out, this is the perfect opportunity to challenge yourself, meet new people, and have fun. We cannot wait to see you at the starting line.

[Shine A Light Event Tickets](#)

We LOVE sponsors! →



4th Annual Shine a Light 5K For Epic-Cure

2025
October 11th @ 7:30 AM
Anastasia Church on the
Island

100% of the proceeds will fund ending food waste and food insecurity.

Platinum \$3,000	Gold \$1750
• Name in media coverage and promotional items • Display your website/logo and link on the website • Banner display • 1st tier name/logo on t-shirts • 7 complimentary registrations	• Display your website/logo and link on website • 2nd tier name/logo on t-shirts • 5 complimentary registrations
Silver \$1000	Bronze \$500
• Display your website/logo and link on website • 3rd tier name/logo on t-shirts • 3 complimentary registrations	• Name on website and t-shirt • 4th tier name/logo on t-shirts • 2 complimentary registrations

**New Location!
New Start time!**

You are welcome to set up a table at the event! Also, please provide us with any swag or flyers you would like included in the race packets.

Special Requests:

Circle your choice: Platinum Gold Silver Bronze

Business Name: _____

Contact Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email: _____ Website: _____

Will you be attending the race? YES NO

For information,
or to Sign up,
Scan here



www.Epic-Cure.org E-mail: Sunny.Mulford@Epic-Cure.org



BINGO for a Cause at Global Bites!

We're teaming up with the brand-new Global Bites Food Truck Park for an evening of food, fun, and fundraising!

Join us for Bingo Night and help support Epic-Cure's mission to eliminate food waste and fight hunger in our community.

Epic-Cure's Fundraising results so far in 2025

Here is a list of the Grants for which we have applied and, where known, the results.

GRANT	AMOUNT	PURPOSE	Granted?
Walmart (FNF)	\$250,000	Infrastructure/equipment– capacity building	Yes
Baptist Health	\$113,000	Infrastructure/equipment– capacity building	Yes
Chick-fil-A	\$350,000	Farm to Table	No Decision
Citi Foundation	\$500,000	Cooking School Infrastructure, Operations	No Decision
Florida Blue	\$396,000	Food-Medicine Program	No Decision
Christ Episcopal Church	\$10,000	Operations	Yes
The Players Club Red Coat	\$15,000	Veterans	No Decision
Lowe's	\$50,000	Palatka Warehouse	No Decision
Ponte Vedra Women's Civic Assoc	\$10,000	Truck fuel and maintenance	No Decision
Kroger Foundation	\$125,000	Farm to Table	No Decision
Sun Life Foundation	\$398,000	Operations	No Decision
Wawa Foundation	\$20,000	Farm to Table	No Decision
Community Foundation NEFL	\$20,000	Infrastructure/equipment– capacity building	Declined



Grant-Fueled Gains: Efficiency in Motion

We're thrilled to share that recent grant awards have delivered some game-changing tools to our operations: a new refrigerated van, a power pallet jack, and a forklift ramp. Each of these additions is more than just equipment—they're investments in our efficiency and productivity.

The refrigerated van allows us to safely transport more perishable food. The power pallet jack makes loading and unloading faster and safer for our volunteers. And the forklift ramp has streamlined our warehouse operations, saving valuable time with every delivery.

With these upgrades, we're able to rescue and distribute more food, more quickly: getting help where it is needed most, even faster. We are deeply grateful to the funders who made this possible. Your support is moving the mission forward—literally.





The great news is we have more equipment coming this month including a 26' refrigerated box truck (brings us up to 4), 2 40' external refrigeration units, and a power stacking pallet jack.

Next things we are seeking through grant funding are a forklift and a commercial floor cleaner. We have 2 auction purchase forklifts, but one doesn't have brakes and the other doesn't shift side to side. They both require a lot of ongoing maintenance to keep them operational. The floor cleaner we have has been beaten up by 4 years of constant use.



Encountering Garbage, Plastics, and Water

The topic that rises to the top this month is bottled water. We track bottled water in its own category when recording pounds in. Of the 4.9 million pounds we've received in 2024, 627,000 were bottled water, which is CRAZY, since most of that was in wrapped pallets of sealed, undamaged bottles. But, we are happy to give it away to families that very much appreciate it. So, it is time to shine a light on this topic.

Data on the exact amount of bottled water disposed of while still full and unused in the U.S. is limited, as most waste metrics focus on the plastic bottles themselves rather than their contents. We all know this is a huge problem, but how bad is it? The concept of "floating islands of garbage" typically refers to large accumulations of marine debris, particularly the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch** (GPGP), located in the North Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and California. Despite the evocative name, these are not solid islands you can walk on but rather vast areas where ocean currents, specifically gyres, concentrate floating debris, primarily plastics. Here is a detailed overview based on available information.

What Are the Floating Islands of Garbage?

- **Misconception of "Islands":** The term "floating island" or "trash island" is misleading. The GPGP and similar patches are not cohesive landmasses but dispersed fields of debris, often described as a "plastic soup" or "peppery soup" due to the prevalence of tiny plastic particles mixed with larger items. They cannot be seen from space or easily detected by satellites because the debris is spread out and much of it is below the surface.
- **Composition:** The GPGP consists mostly of microplastics (particles smaller than 5 millimeters), which make up about 94% of the plastic by count, though larger items like fishing nets, bottles, and other debris are also present. Fishing nets alone account for nearly half the mass of the GPGP. About 70% of the debris sinks to the ocean floor, with the rest floating at or near the surface.
- **Size and Scope:** Estimates suggest the GPGP spans approximately 1.6 million square kilometers (about twice the size of Texas or three times the size of France). It contains an estimated 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic, weighing around 80,000 to 100,000 metric tons. The exact size is hard to pin down due to the dynamic nature of ocean currents and the dispersion of debris.
- **Location:** The GPGP is split into two main areas: the **Western Garbage Patch** near Japan and the **Eastern Garbage Patch** between Hawaii and California, linked by the North Pacific Subtropical Convergence Zone. Similar patches exist in other oceans, like the North Atlantic Garbage Patch, within the five major ocean gyres.



Origins and Causes

The GPGP was predicted in a 1988 NOAA paper but was first observed in 1997 by Captain Charles Moore, who encountered a vast stretch of debris while sailing from Hawaii to California. His discovery, through the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, brought global attention to the issue.

- **Sources of Debris:** About 80% of the plastic in the GPGP comes from land-based sources (e.g., litter carried by rivers or wind), with the remaining 20% from marine sources like ships and fishing activities. Asia, particularly China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, is identified as a major contributor, though the U.S. and other countries also add to the problem. Industrial fishing, especially abandoned nets, is a significant factor.
- **Plastic Persistence:** Plastics are durable, non-biodegradable, and break down into smaller pieces over time due to sunlight and wave action, creating microplastics that persist for decades. Some debris in the GPGP dates back to the 1970s, and the patch is growing as plastic input exceeds output.

Environmental and Ecological Impacts

- **Marine Life:** The GPGP poses severe threats to marine animals. Sea turtles and seabirds, like albatrosses, often ingest plastics, mistaking them for food, leading to starvation or chemical contamination. For example, up to 74% of sea turtle diets in the patch can consist of plastic, and albatross chicks have been found with 45% of their body mass as plastic. Entanglement in fishing nets, known as “ghost fishing,” also kills marine life.
- **Ecosystem Changes:** Surprisingly, the GPGP supports thriving communities of coastal species (e.g., crabs, anemones) living on floating plastics, far from their natural habitats. This creates new, unnatural ecosystems, with coastal and open-ocean species competing or preying on each other. The long-term ecological consequences of these “floating ecosystems” are unclear.
- **Human Health:** While direct impacts on humans are still under study, microplastics have been found in seafood, sea salt, and even household dust, raising concerns about potential health risks from ingestion or chemical exposure.

Cleanup Efforts and Challenges

- **The Ocean Cleanup:** The Ocean Cleanup is a nonprofit led by Boyan Slat. It has removed over 20 million kilograms of trash from the GPGP by November 2024 using large net-based systems like “System 03.” However, cleaning the entire patch is daunting due to its size, depth, and microplastic dominance. Estimates suggest it would take 67 ships a year to clean just 1% of the North Pacific Ocean.



- **Challenges:** Microplastics are nearly impossible to remove cost-effectively due to their small size and dispersion. Cleanup efforts risk harming marine life caught in nets. Prevention, such as reducing single-use plastics and intercepting debris in rivers, is seen as more feasible.
- **Other Initiatives:** Projects like 4Ocean and Plastic Free Waters focus on coastal cleanups and reducing plastic use. The NOAA Marine Debris Program emphasizes prevention and shoreline removal as more practical solutions.

Other “Floating Islands”

- **Thilafushi, Maldives:** Unlike the GPGP, Thilafushi is a literal artificial island built as a landfill for trash, often referred to as a “floating island of garbage” due to its waste-based construction.

What Can Be Done?

- **Individual Actions:** Reduce single-use plastics (e.g., using reusable bottles and bags), support recycling, and participate in coastal cleanups.
- **Policy and Industry:** Recent developments in corporate social responsibility (CSR) for beverage companies regarding single-use plastics reflect growing regulatory pressure, consumer demand, and innovative efforts to reduce plastic pollution.

Companies like Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé, and Danone face accusations of “ecopostureo” (greenwashing) for promoting pseudo-sustainable packaging. A 2025 lawsuit highlighted their contribution to 24% of global plastic pollution, with pledges often focusing on recycling rather than reducing virgin plastic.

Only 2% of plastic packaging is recycled back into packaging globally, with most efforts focusing on “end-of-life” solutions like cleanups rather than source reduction.

As part of the CSR movement, companies are collaborating with NGOs and governments. The “Every Bottle Back” initiative by the American Beverage Association, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and others invests in recycling infrastructure to reduce virgin plastic use.

- **Research and Innovation:** Continued study of microplastic impacts and development of technologies to target smaller debris are critical. And innovation for alternative packaging is critical.

Alternatives to virgin plastic are gaining traction for their sustainability and functionality. Recycled post-consumer plastic (PCR) reduces waste and emissions by up to 80%, used in packaging and electronics, though food-grade applications need strict processing. Bio-based plastics, derived from cornstarch or sugarcane, offer biodegradability, with innovations like seawater-dissolving polymers, but often require commercial composting. Molded fiber and



paper-based materials, widely recyclable, are ideal for food service and CPG packaging, with new paperboards mimicking plastic's strength. These options balance environmental benefits with practical applications but face challenges in scalability and durability.

Mushroom packaging, grown from mycelium and agricultural waste, is home-compostable and suited for protective packaging, though limited to non-structural uses. Hemp-based materials, leveraging fast-growing hemp, provide biodegradable options for packaging and construction but face regulatory hurdles. Aluminum and glass, infinitely recyclable, excel in beverage and reusable containers, despite higher initial costs. Bamboo-based packaging, used in cosmetics and cutlery, is sustainable but application-specific. Prioritizing materials that support a circular economy – through reuse, recycling, or composting – is key, with PCR and molded fiber leading for scalability, while bioplastics and mycelium offer innovative potential.

Outlook While beverage companies are making strides – through rPET (recycled polyethylene terephthalates - a type of plastic made from recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET), a common material used in items like plastic bottles, food containers, and polyester clothing) adoption, compostable packaging, and EPR compliance – progress is slow and inconsistent. Most commitments prioritize recycling over reducing virgin plastic, and systemic change is needed to address the 34 million tons of annual plastic packaging waste from the food and beverage sector. Continued innovation, stricter regulations, and consumer pressure will drive future progress.

<https://theoceancleanup.com/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>

<https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-great-pacific-garbage>

<https://eos.org/articles/in-the-great-pacific-garbage-patch-new-marine-ecosystems-are-flourishing>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2873010/>

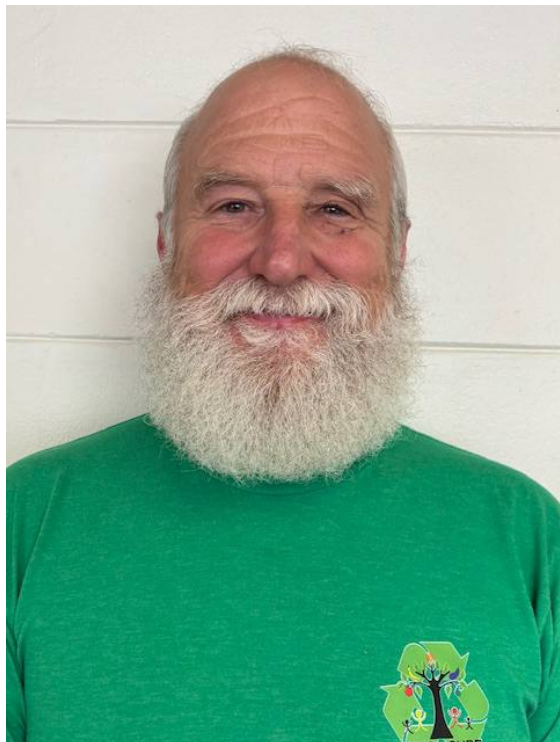
<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/cumulative-global-plastics>

<https://www.epa.gov/plastics/best-practices>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1019774/plastic-waste-volume-globally/>



Volunteer Spotlight



Rick Bloom

By Janet McNabb

In introducing me to Rick Bloom, Sunny said the following:

“Rick has the skills and tools and puts them to work constantly for us. He did all of the electrical work on our new building (Palatka), and continues to make improvements to our working conditions. Recently he got two vent fans repaired, installed and running. Last week he got a 17–18 year old A/C unit up and running, and he donated a window unit so the volunteers have a place to cool off in the summer.”

Obviously this a valuable man! When I asked him where he learned this important trade he said

that early in his career he was fortunate enough to work with a number of Naval reservists. He said he was young and full of ambition while they were older gentlemen with decades of experience and eager to teach. From them he learned everything from welding, machinist, electrical, plumbing and A/C. He said they were great people “much like the people at Epic-Cure.”

Born in Miami, he stayed close to home for many years. Working at Jackson Memorial Hospital, his vast knowledge in the trades moved him up rapidly to becoming foreman, superintendent, and ultimately Director, each time with more responsibility. He spent 32 years there before retiring for the first time.

Then he became Executive Director of Facilities for the University of Miami medical campus, a position he held for 14 years. There he managed 7 Directors and 120 staff that maintained 7 million square feet of medical facilities reaching from Key West to Jacksonville. Then he retired again.

In considering where to buy a retirement home, they decided on Melrose where they would be close to their daughter who insisted on becoming a Gator. He and his wife Maria also have two sons, one who lives near them and one in North Carolina.



Retirement brought time to travel in their RV. They've enjoyed visiting the museums in Washington DC, also Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. However they now have chickens, a dog, and two cats. Maria, his wife of 41 years, is a beekeeper. All that has slowed down their travel plans.

As a great pastime, Rick has enjoyed riding his motorcycle for over 50 years. When he met Maria 43 years ago he got her interested too. They like to get out for a ride at least once a month.

Shortly after retiring and moving to Melrose they discovered Epic-Cure. At first he volunteered on Fridays, then Wednesdays and Fridays. Now that schedule stands, picking up deliveries on Fridays, and also being available any other time. He started volunteering last August, so he was at the right place and time to help with the move to the new building the first of this year. He spent two months straight working on the electrical systems, getting rid of the old and installing the new.

About the volunteers he said that it's not like being in a business with people. Volunteers are there because they want to be. None is selfish, all are a joy to work with. Regarding Sunny and Ken, he said there is no better leadership, which makes you want to do more.

We are grateful you chose this area for retirement, and especially that you have been such a tremendous help in using your talents to improve our Palatka facility. Thank you.

The Board of Directors of Epic-Cure®

The first few months of 2025 have been eventful. We secured a new logistics facility in Palatka, and that was a monumental effort with much aid from the community and, especially, our volunteers. We missed not a beat, as our throughput (pounds in and pounds out) hit all-time records (since surpassed) in the the midst of the manic several months from September 2024 to Janusry 2025. So preoccupied were we that we almost forgot that in June 2024, Epic-Cure® was awarded a \$1.5 million appropriation by the State of Florida to construct a new logistics facility in St. Augustine, a project that we undertook because of the vast difficulties experienced in out current St. Augustine facility: lack of size, insufficient infrastructure, and a skeptical landlord.

Just prior to 2024, Epic-Cure lost two members of our Board of Directors: Monica Ortiz-Sanchez resigned for family reasons, and Greg Boester passed away. We instituted a search for replacement Directors, and we are delighted to report that we found, recruited, and successfully added two wonderful new Directors with great backgrounds, big hearts, and much



enthusiasm and energy: Wilson “Brad” Bradshaw and Elisabeth “Lisa” Chismark. Here is a little introduction to our newest Directors. They are now serving three year terms that expire on January 31, 2028.

Wilson G. Bradshaw, Ph.D.

President Emeritus, Florida Gulf Coast University



Wilson G. Bradshaw, Ph.D. served as President of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) from 2007 to June 30, 2017 when he retired as president. On August 25, 2007, the Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees unanimously selected Dr. Bradshaw to become the institution’s third President. During his tenure, FGCU experienced tremendous growth in both size and complexity. In recognition of Dr. Bradshaw’s decade of distinguished service, the university awarded him President Emeritus status and in October of 2019, the Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees unanimously voted to approve the naming of the university library as **“The Wilson G. Bradshaw Library.”**

President Bradshaw came to FGCU from Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, where he served for seven years as President. His previous academic administrative positions included Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, Vice President and Dean for Graduate Studies and Research at Georgia Southern University, and Dean of Graduate Studies at Florida Atlantic University. During his tenure as President, Dr. Bradshaw served on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Saint Paul Library, the United Way of the Twin Cities, the Saint Paul Police Foundation, the Bush Foundation, the Minnesota Foundation, Securian Financial, Inc (A corporate Board of Directors) and the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation. Currently, Dr. Bradshaw serves on the Board of the Friends of the Main Branch of the St. Johns County Public Library.

Born in Sanford, Florida, and raised in West Palm Beach, Dr. Bradshaw earned his Ph.D. in neuroscience (psychobiology) from the University of Pittsburgh. He was awarded a National Institute of Health Post-Doctoral Fellowship in the Laboratory of Neural and Endocrine Regulation at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). As a scholar and researcher, Dr. Bradshaw earned the rank of full-professor. President Emeritus Bradshaw and his wife, Jo Anna, now reside in Saint Augustine. The Bradshaws have three adult sons.



Elisabeth “Lisa” Chismark, Ph.D.



Elisabeth (Lisa) Chismark was born in Indianapolis, IN, but is a small town girl from Jonesboro, IN. Her nursing career took her all over the country, she retired in 2023 from her nursing journey. She and her husband Mike have lived in St. Augustine since 2004. They have 2 adult children, daughter Meghan in the Chicago area and son Dan in Johnson City, TN.

Lisa has been an active volunteer with Epic-Cure for four years. She and Mike do a monthly Saturday distribution in the Oyster Creek neighborhood on Woodlawn Street. She also teaches weekly cooking classes at this same location with the Sustain U Epic-Cure program, juggling sharp knives, hot food and junior high kids.

She has a BA in Psychology and an AD in Nursing from Purdue University, BSN from the University of Memphis, a MSN in Nursing Education from Union University and a PhD from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. Her Ph.D. studies were with a young adult Sickle Cell Disease population, investigating secondary complications and a polymorphism in the C-reactive protein gene.

She was awarded a National Institute of Health (NIH) Fellowship in the Summer Genetics Institute in 2006. In 2009, she was selected by the NIH as a Faculty Champion for the incorporation of genetics/genomics into baccalaureate nursing education.

Early work was in ICU and CCU units, then 18 years as a clinically certified research coordinator in adult cardiology. She worked as a Clinical Specialist in Hematology and was the manager of the Nursing Education Department at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. She was an assistant professor at Clemson University, adjunct faculty for University of TN Health Science Center, Georgetown University, independent consultant with Flagler Hospital, Pearson Education, Inc., & The Law Offices of Craig & Lofton.

She has served on numerous boards:

- Women of Vision/Flagler College-advisory board
- Wildflower Healthcare/Good Samaritan Health Center-Board of Directors-president
- Sigma Theta Tau-Board of Directors-vice president
- Advisory Board for UAB School of Nursing PAHO/WHO Collaborating Center
- International Assoc. of Sickle Cell Nurses and Physician Assistants-Board of Directors
- Leadership Collierville Classes-Board of Directors
- Stand by Me non-profit-Board of Directors-CEO



Lisa's Board experience continued:

Downs Syndrome of Memphis/Special Kids, Board of Directors-president
Collierville Soccer Association-Board of Directors-president

She is currently an active member of the St. Augustine Women's Exchange and P.E.O.

Here is the remaining list of our Directors:

Board of Directors, Epic-Cure Inc.

Sunny Mulford, President/Treasurer and Executive Director

Saint Augustine, FL
Chubb Group
Term expires: 1/31/2028

Ken Mulford, CFA, Vice President/Secretary and Managing Director

Saint Augustine, FL
Chief Financial Officer, Trevally Capital LLC
Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts
Term expires: 1/31/2028

Hanna Layton, Director

New York, NY
Thrive Consultancy
Term expires: 1/31/2026

Michele Anderson, Director

Saint Augustine, FL
Ketterlinus Elementary School
Term expires: 1/31/2026

Wendy Lantz-Caudill, Director

Saint Augustine, FL
Nurse Practitioner, Old Moultrie Surgical Center
Term expires: 1/31/2027

Jeremy Manning, Director

Albany, NY
Attorney at Law
Manning Esq.
Term expires: 1/31/2027



Some timely reminders ...

Epic-Cure's Mission: Epic-Cure's mission is to improve health, social, and economic outcomes for the most vulnerable populations by sourcing donations of fresh food bound for landfills (reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and redirecting that food to food insecure individuals directly in the neighborhoods where they reside. We also foster self-reliance as we aim to break the chains of generational welfare by teaching nutrition and cooking skills to teenaged students of Title-1 schools, culminating in part time jobs in the restaurant business and a clear eyed look at the world of possibilities for success.

A brief history of Epic-Cure®: When we learned, to our dismay, that 38% of the food that we produce in the U.S. ends up in landfills, we decided to take urgent action to solve this problem. It is unacceptable to them that in the richest nation in the world, we throw away the solution to food insecurity.

Epic-Cure® (an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit operating in Northeast Florida) was formed to eliminate food waste and food insecurity in their community. In the early days of the founding of Epic-Cure®, we decided to create an entrepreneurial nonprofit enterprise, one unburdened by bureaucracy and dedicated to fast, efficient, and continuous action to eliminate food waste and food insecurity. We decided on and still practice and ethos of saying “yes” to solutions and people, affirming their dignity at every turn and creating a warm and gracious community where all are welcomed.

The first decision made was to eliminate all barriers to participation as volunteers or as clients. The second key decision taken was to begin as a food pantry and, over time, evolve into a food bank. Learning the business of food rescue and food distribution was key to becoming efficient with the logistics of the endeavor. It was a fundamental tenet informing the decision to seamlessly address the problems of food waste and food insecurity and to scale the business (i.e., expand Epic-Cure's reach). Epic-Cure® established a mobile distribution model, placing regular weekly food distribution to families right in their neighborhoods. In keeping with Epic-Cure's ethos, the choice method of food distributions was implemented everywhere it was possible to do so.

As this model developed, it became clear that the transition to a food bank paradigm was inevitable. Expanding Epic-Cure's reach demanded it. Today, Epic-Cure is seamlessly both a food pantry and a food bank.

A Food Bank AND a Food Pantry: So, we have touched on a key element of Epic-Cure's operations. Not many nonprofits that address food insecurity operate quite like we do. The key here is that Epic-Cure® operates as a food bank and as a food pantry. What's the difference between the two? Why do we operate as both? Let's investigate.



We started out as a **food pantry**. A food pantry is a small, local place (often in a community center, church, or nonprofit) where people can go directly to pick up free food, like canned goods, fresh produce, meat, drinks, or bread. Pantries get most of their food from food banks but might also accept local donations. They are like a "retail" spot where individuals or families get groceries to take home. But our operations relied more on food rescue – seeking food directly from sources like grocery stores – than on other food banks. This distinction is vital to our development as a food bank, too.

A **food bank** is like a big warehouse that collects, stores, and distributes large amounts of food to help people in need. It gets donations from grocery stores, manufacturers, farms, and individuals, then sends that food to smaller organizations, like food pantries, shelters, or soup kitchens, across a wide area (like a city or region). Think of it as the "wholesale" supplier of food for hunger relief. Epic-Cure sourced much of its food, even in the early days operating as a food pantry, from some of these resources. That is an important reason for how much we have leveraged up our throughput (you know, the Pounds In and Pounds Out business that we so often trumpet).

Why has Epic-Cure® evolved into this hybrid model – as a food bank and as a food pantry? Here are some of the key reasons, but it can all be best summarized as increasing our reach and helping more people more efficiently.

Operating as both a food bank and a food pantry offers several key benefits for addressing food insecurity:

- **Streamlined Operations:** By managing both the large-scale distribution (food bank) and direct client services (food pantry), Epic-Cure® can reduce costs and increase efficiencies. For example, we can simplify logistics and directly control the flow of food from donation to distribution.
- **Greater Community Impact:** Serving as a food bank allows us to supply other local organizations (like shelters or other pantries), expanding our reach across a region. Meanwhile, running a pantry lets us directly help individuals with their immediate needs in their immediate community, ensuring both broad and local impact.
- **Better Resource Allocation:** Epic-Cure® can prioritize food distribution based on real-time needs. For instance, we can send surplus food to other organizations via the food bank or keep it for our own distributions when local need is high, reducing waste and maximizing use of donations.
- **Direct Feedback Loop:** Operating a pantry gives us firsthand insight into client needs (e.g., specific dietary preferences or cultural food demands). This informs what we



collect and distribute as a food bank or pantry, making their overall efforts more effective and tailored.

- **Increased Funding Opportunities:** Managing both functions can make Epic-Cure® more attractive to donors, grants, and partners. We can showcase a comprehensive approach – regional distribution and direct aid – which may appeal to a wider range of funders, from large corporations to local supporters.
- **Enhanced Community Trust:** Running a pantry builds direct relationships with the community (all of our mobile distributions are done with community partners), fostering trust and engagement. At the same time, being a food bank establishes credibility with other nonprofits and agencies, strengthening our reputation as a leader in hunger relief.
- **Flexibility in Crisis Response:** In emergencies (like natural disasters or economic crises), Epic-Cure can quickly shift resources – using the food bank to supply affected areas and the pantry to serve local spikes in demand - without relying on external partners.

This hybrid model makes Epic-Cure® more efficient and responsive.

On the Horizon – the very near horizon!

SNAP Benefits – The Times They Are A-Changin’

With nearly one-quarter of the \$93.8 billion in annual SNAP benefits being spent on soda and junk food, upcoming state-level efforts to restrict these purchases through waivers and the progress of the Healthy SNAP Act legislation will be important to watch for their potential impact on food rescue operations.

In fiscal year 2024, the federal government spent approximately \$100.3 billion on SNAP, with about \$93.8 billion (93.5%) going toward monthly benefits. Dividing the \$93.8 billion by 12 months gives an estimated \$7.82 billion per month in SNAP benefits.

This figure is an average and can fluctuate due to changes in participation, economic conditions, and policy adjustments. For example, in 2024, an average of 41.1 million people participated in SNAP each month, with an average benefit of about \$187 per person per month in fiscal year 2025 (approximately \$6.16 per day). Multiplying 41.1 million participants by \$187 yields roughly \$7.69 billion per month, aligning closely with the annual estimate.

Based on available data, approximately 20-23% of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are spent on soda and junk food.



This includes:

- **Sugary Beverages:** Around 9-10% of SNAP benefits are spent on sweetened beverages, such as soda, fruit juices, energy drinks, and sweetened teas. This figure comes from a 2016 USDA report and other studies, which note that soda alone accounts for about 5% of SNAP food expenditures.
- **Junk Food:** Broadly defined, junk food (including sweetened beverages, candy, desserts, and salty snacks) accounts for roughly 20-23% of SNAP dollars, according to sources like the USDA and recent analyses. For instance, a 2016 USDA study found that 22.6% of SNAP household grocery bills went to these items, compared to 19.7% for non-SNAP households.

These numbers vary slightly across sources due to differences in defining “junk food” and data collection methods. For comparison, non-SNAP households spend slightly less on these categories (e.g., 7% on sugary drinks and 19.7% on junk food), indicating similar consumption patterns across income levels.

Note: The data reflects spending patterns from studies primarily conducted between 2016 and 2022, and exact percentages may vary with newer data or changes in SNAP usage.

So, What’s a Trillion Among Friends?

We keep hearing about trillion dollar deficits. As of April 2025, the U.S. national debt is approximately **\$36.2 trillion**.

- That number looks like this: **\$36,200,000,000,000**.

How might we conceptualize this number? Let’s think about just 1 trillion. Let’s use time to wrap our arms around just how big that number is. In fact, let’s use seconds (not days, weeks, months, or years). How far back in time would 1 million seconds take us?

- 1,000,000 seconds is roughly 11 days, 13 hours, and 46 minutes.
- It would take us back from June 8th (as we write this AMEC Newsletter) to ... May 28th.
- Here is the math (next page):
 - $1,000,000 \text{ seconds} \div 60 = \text{approximately } 16,666.67 \text{ minutes.}$
 - $16,666.67 \text{ minutes} \div 60 = \text{approximately } 277.78 \text{ hours.}$
 - $277.78 \text{ hours} \div 24 = \text{approximately } \mathbf{11.57 \text{ days.}}$



So, we should not go too far back to get 1 trillion seconds in, no? Let's do the math:

- $1,000,000,000,000 \text{ seconds} \div 60 = \text{approximately } 16,666,666,666.67 \text{ minutes.}$
- $16,666,666,666.67 \text{ minutes} \div 60 = \text{approximately } 277,777,777.78 \text{ hours.}$
- $277,777,777.78 \text{ hours} \div 24 = \text{approximately } 11,574,074.07 \text{ days.}$
- $11,574,074.07 \text{ days} \div 365.25 = \text{approximately } \mathbf{31,710.26 \text{ years.}}$

Wait, what? Almost 32,000 years back? Guys, please check our math for us. That is a crazy big number of years ago. And, we are not finished. We must multiply 31,710.26 years by 36.2 if we want to get our arms around the US national debt. Here is that number:

- $36.2 \text{ trillion} \times 31,710.26 \text{ years} = \mathbf{1,147,911.41 \text{ years.}}$

So, if every dollar of our national debt were a second, those seconds would stretch back in time more than 1.1 million years.

For perspective, homo sapiens (you know, us), as a distinct species, first appeared approximately 300,000 to 350,000 years ago, based on fossil evidence from sites like Jebel Irhoud in Morocco (dated around 315,000 years ago) and genetic studies tracing early human populations.

So, friends, that is what trillions look like. And, that is what we must pay back, either by cutting spending (uh, benefits) and increasing revenues (uh, taxes) ... or ... by inflation. Ouch: we have talked about inflation before, and this is not likely to be easy.

Now, let us dive just a tiny bit deeper and figure out what the US National Debt burden is for each of us, individually. At the beginning of 2025, the US population is estimated at 325.4 million US citizens and non-citizen residents. If we were to stop the clock on interest payments and have every one of us pay the debt off, we would each need to write a check for about **\$111,248.00.**

- A family of four (4) would need to write this check: \$444,991.00.

Again: ouch.



Awareness:

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 financial statements and tax returns for fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023 have been released and are available upon request.

- Also available on our website.
- Click here to view: [Epic-Cure's Financial Statements](#)

Our 2024 audited financial statements are “under construction” now.

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