



The Almost Monthly Epic-Cure Newsletter

March, 2024

The Epic-Cure <i>Report Card</i> as of February 29, 2024		
Life to Date <i>(since May 24, 2019)</i>		
Pounds In/Out	21,255,263	
Wholesale Value of Food Distributed	\$40,676,266	
Pounds of Food per Family	68.95	<i>Average pounds per family per visit</i>
Meals Served	17.7 million	<i>Assumes 1.2 pounds per meal</i>
Families Served		
Number of Families	6,303	<i>Month of February 2024</i>
Number of Distributions	75	<i>Month of February 2024</i>
Pounds In – February 2024		
Total Pounds In / Out	629,706	<i>Month of February 2024</i>
Total Pounds In / Out	534,904	<i>Average of 3 prior months</i>
Operating Efficiency		
Wholesale value of food distributed for each \$1.00 spent on Epic-Cure's® Operations		\$35.18

Good News

We return to the Almost Monthly Epic-Cure® Newsletter with this, the March edition, proving our foresight in our naming the letter for you!

The past couple of months have been incredibly busy ones, consolidating the St. Augustine warehouse, writing our annual report (available for all that email for a copy), and working to secure funding for a permanent home in St. Augustine.

Speaking of this fundraising effort, we can share some good news. We have confirmation that our full \$1.5m in funding from the State of Florida to build a warehouse in St. Augustine is in the State budget. As long as Gov. DeSantis does not veto it, we will get the money. Our lobbyist thinks the outlook is positive. No idea what the funding timing will be. Closer we inch!



7 Days a Week

Both warehouses are in operation 7 days a week, including holidays. When you look at the Report Card, those accomplishments are all thanks to our hard working, dedicated volunteers who have taken ownership of all of the jobs it takes to rescue food and help our neighbors, family and friends that are in need. Our volunteers do store pickups in personal vehicles, sort food at the warehouses, drive refrigerated box trucks, perform administrative work, and help with cooking classes.

And, there is the cleaning. 17,500 sq. ft. of warehouse space is a lot to clean every week.

And, handy people and mechanics. Without being asked, our volunteers just quietly fix everything from pallet jacks, hydraulics on the forklifts, commercial floor cleaners, create forklift fork extenders out of spare parts, repair roll up doors, make metal ramps to drive forklifts into the freezer units, fix potholes in the parking lot, etc. Those are just the recent things, but there is so much more that just quietly happens.

Cheers to all of you for all you do!!

St. Augustine Warehouse Consolidation

We completed the consolidation at the end of January. More on that in the PIPS notes below.

A few people we need to mention that helped us out tremendously with this are Glacier Heating and Air Conditioning and Stephanie Infante.

Our landlord was not interested in helping us cover the cost of installing air conditioning in the unit we consolidated into. We have to have air conditioning, not for our comfort, but for food preservation. Knowing that we consolidated to save money, Charles (Tuesday volunteer) called his friends at Glacier Heating and Air Conditioning to see if they could help us out. They did the job at material cost saving us \$7,000. They are hometown heroes in our book.





To help us use our vertical space and alleviate new floor space challenges, our long time supporter, Stephanie Infante, donated this beautiful new stacking power pallet jack. It was like Christmas on February 28th when it was delivered to the warehouse. All of the volunteers that see it for the first time take a moment to admire it and appreciate what that means for us operationally.





Gleaning and Gift Gardens

We are off to an amazing start this year with food sourced from gleaning and Gift Gardens. Thanks to our partners Society of St. Andrews and Compassionate St. Augustine, we received a total of 4,439 pounds of fresh from the farm produce. That's up from just 80 pounds in January and February of 2023.

This is Mike Connor, Gleaning Coordinator for Society of St. Andrews (and a regular volunteer for Epic-Cure), delivering one of his many truckloads of broccoli to our St. Augustine warehouse.



This load was too big to fit in Mike's truck so we had to send one of ours.

The students of Annunciation Catholic School make quick work of gleaning 884 pounds of broccoli from a farm in Hastings.





This is what community is all about, having a support system when you need it and giving back when you can. Check out the message from Jessica in the link below the picture.



[Giving Back](#)

Volunteers harvesting and delivering 98 pounds of mustard and turnip greens from Jessica's garden...





The next 2 pictures are of Arthur Culbert, Compassionate St. Augustine, delivering produce harvested from the Lincolnville Gift Garden.



Food Desert

We've all heard about them, but what are they? This is a good article that defines food deserts, describes the impact of them, and how to combat them.

<https://feedingnefl.org/what-is-a-food-desert/>

We agree wholeheartly with their action plan in combating food desert residents' challenges through their mobile food pantry program. "This program brings fresh and shelf-stable food directly into



communities that lack access to grocery stores. Partnering with local churches and community groups, more than 1,500 of these distribution events happen each year.”

In 2023, Epic-Cure did over 800 mobile food distributions.

Fundraising

Marie McCloud, Donna Bass and the Refuge distribution team are putting on this BBQ dinner fundraiser for us. We hope you will join us.



Saturday March 16, 11-3 Come grab a BBQ pork dinner for \$10. Epic helps over 1500 families a week, help us continue to serve our community. All proceeds benefits Epic-Cure Food Distributions.

BBQ Pork dinner includes:
BBQ pork, Baked beans, and potato salad.

(386) 227-7611
389 N HWY 17
Palatka, FL 32177

Your small donation makes a big difference

We want to take a moment and send a huge thank you to Kevin and Kim Leonardi of Leonardi's Nursery. They are long time supporters and have literally helped us keep the lights on for 5 years. If you are customers of theirs, please thank them for their generosity.



★ Located across from the Alligator Farm and right in front of the Lighthouse at 902 Anastasia Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL 32080
904-829-5909

☉ Monday-Saturday 8:30-5:30
Sunday 9:30-5
Closed for major holidays:
New Years Day, Easter, 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas

ABOUT US
Leonardi's Nursery is a family-owned retail nursery and landscaping company. We are located in St. Augustine, Florida and have been proudly serving the community for over 60 years. We are well-known in the area for our large selection of pottery and unique plants. Not only do we offer plants and pottery, we also do full-service landscaping, irrigation and paver installations. Stop in and see us for any of your landscaping needs or contact us today! We're here to help you make your outdoor spaces beautiful!



Our partners at New Mt. Moriah Christian Ministry held a block party fundraiser for Epic-Cure.

It was a glorious sunny afternoon, with plenty of food and fun. Our deepest thanks to Pastor Anthony and Carol Britton and their congregation for their warm grace and open hearts. This event has connected us even more closely with the community while raising awareness and funds (over \$1,800 – yay!!!) for Epic-Cure. Thank you for supporting our mission to end food waste, promote food security and foster self reliance!!



If you are interested in doing a fundraiser for Epic-Cure, we would be extremely grateful if you did.

School Food Waste

Other than to raise awareness, this is not an area we will be able to impact. The change needs to be systemwide.

On December 2, 2023, EPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration released the "Draft National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics." They allowed for public comment on their strategy and this was ReFed's comment regarding school food waste.

"Make evidence-based best practices for reducing food waste in the national school lunch and breakfast programs mandatory. Best practices that have proven to reduce cafeteria food waste, such as offering more entrée choices, addressing the time and length of mealtimes, and implementing offer versus serve should be required by FNS rather than suggested for consideration. FNS should also encourage schools to solicit feedback from students on their lunch options and reasons for wasting food and accordingly adjust how food is served to increase consumption. The agencies should also consider ways to support food waste audits in schools,



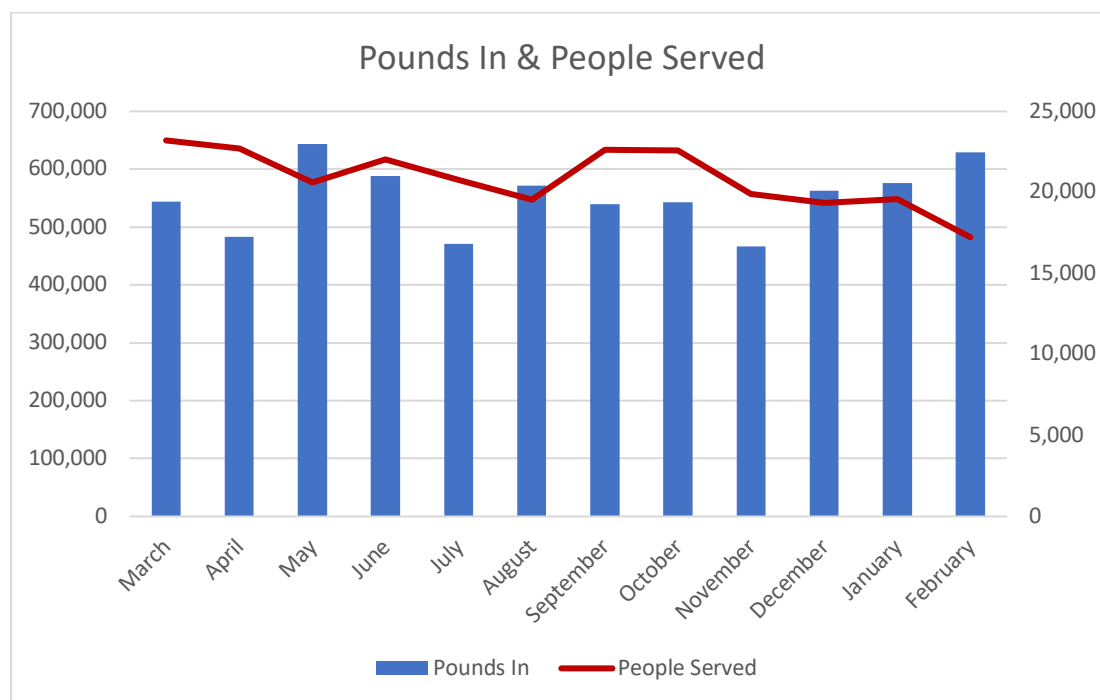
leveraging pre-existing resources and resources. Furthermore, USDA should provide broad approval across all states to add bulk milk dispensers and other required equipment to their Capital Expenditure lists for schools. This would eliminate the need for schools to seek state agency pre-approval for the purchase.”

ReFed had many great suggestions. You can read the full blog article and the National Draft Strategy in these links:

[Full Blog Article](#)

[National Draft Strategy](#)

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



Notes on the graph:

We completed the consolidation of the St. Augustine warehouses and made the transition from Thursday shopping for patrons to Thursday shopping for agencies. As a result, people directly served decreased but people served indirectly through other agencies increased. Pounds of food provided to other agencies so far this year:

January	44,623
February	84,419
Grand Total	129,042



February was a month where we had a super abundance of produce which allowed us to share more than usual with other agencies.

Month	Total Pounds	Bakery	Water	Dairy	Deli	Dry Goods	Frozen Misc	Produce	Meat	Non-Food	Refrigerated Products
January	575,799	31,514	36,471	66,266	3,445	177,041	33,511	137,892	73,979	6,097	9,583
February	629,706	24,538	36,006	57,321	2,746	142,831	19,199	255,375	84,422	6,191	1,077

The list of agencies we supply food to include:

County	Agency	Total
Duval	Feeding Northeast Florida	1,986
	Mandarin Food Bank	1,464
	Duval Total	3,450
Putnam	Bread of Life	1,880
	Calvary Life Center	22,431
	Feed the Need	5,011
	Helping Hands Welaka	600
	Interlachen Soup Kitchen	2,000
	Lake Area Ministries	3,330
	Parkview Church	970
	Rodeheaver Boy's Ranch	3,888
	Sharing Putnam's Bounty	11,003
	So. Putnam Christian	1,500
	St. Monica's Church	7,761
	Putnam Total	60,374
St. Johns	Betty Griffin	247
	Catholic Charities St. Aug.	720
	Home Again St. Johns	2,960
	Homeless Coalition	420
	Port In The Storm	1,072
	Simon's House	49,902
	Southwoods Elementary	3,145
	St. Augustine Youth Svcs	2,366
	St. Johns Food Pantry	4,386
	St. Johns Total	65,218
Grand Total		129,042



Volunteer Spotlight

By Janet McNabb

Maria Crann



Maria and Sunny have a common passion and that is teaching kids and veterans how to cook. It's no surprise that they've worked together on these projects since 2020.

At Sunny's request, Maria started cooking classes at the Boys and Girls Club for middle school kids once or twice a week. In their kitchen Maria, Sunny and a team of chef volunteers provide all the necessary ingredients and equipment to create a specific meal. Maria always brings the finished product to share with the kids at the end of the session to enjoy with them. In the meantime they have each learned how to make it and have the finished project to take home with them. One

thing keeps this program from happening more frequently and that is a lack of volunteers to assist them.

Most recently once a month on Friday night's the students join her at the Elks Club to prepare a meal for all who are dining at the club. It is like working in a real restaurant. The kids get a great sense of accomplishment.

Maria recently ventured out on her own and opened Saint Augustine Create-aCook. Thanks to the After School Enrichment Program of St. Johns County, Maria and her business partner Bethany Mitidieri take their mobile teaching kitchen to different schools for five week sessions to teach the kids different kinds of meals, such as Mexican or Italian.

Maria and Bethany co-own Saint Augustine Creat-A-Cook and also Cutie Pie's Bake Shop. In September they will open their new venue in the Marks Pond Industrial Complex near Palencia housing both Create-a-Cook cooking school and Cutie Pies Bake Shop. From there they will offer to teach kids or adults to cook also offering themed birthday parties or special events.

The other goal of Sunny's, teaching veterans to cook, was accomplished by Maria at the Stephen A. Cullen Center in Jacksonville. She's so moved by their attention and devotion to these classes.

Prior to her profession as a chef Maria was in law enforcement in Pennsylvania for 29 years. During her last few years at that job she started culinary school completing the course in three years of evening classes. Her mother and other sibling are still in Pennsylvania, so she travels up to visit them often. She's hoping her mother will spend some time with her here in Saint



Augustine. She is currently renovating their home, and has a special room set aside for her mother. Maria's husband is happily retired, and their daughter is working nearby. Maria enjoys going out on their boat with them to do a little fishing.

Besides her many other jobs, Maria is also assistant manager of the Black Fly restaurant two nights a week.

*** **COMING SOON:** Summer Camp from June 3 through August 2 Monday through Thursday from 9-12. Each camp will be one week at First Coast Technical High School. Every week will have a different theme such as baking and cake decorating or creating savory dishes. Watch for further announcements.

Maria's devotion to teaching her students is so admirable! Epic-Cure is thankful for all she does in making their common passions become a reality. Thank you, Maria!

Sustain U.®

We just wrapped up our Winter session with the kids at Woodlawn Terrace and the Boys and Girls Club. Actually, the classes at Woodlawn ended a little early due to challenges at that location. Our friends at New Mt. Moriah Church have agreed to let us use their kitchen for those classes going forward. The church is just one block away from Woodlawn Terrace, so we will still serve the West St. Augustine community.





One new addition to the cooking class program we are very excited about are monthly dinners at The Elks Club in St. Augustine. They are allowing us to use their commercial kitchen to make dinner for their members. We hire students from the cooking class program so they can put their learned skills to use in a real working environment. The first dinner they made was Roasted Pork with Mustard Sauce, Rice, Roasted Vegetables, and Apple Pie Parfait.



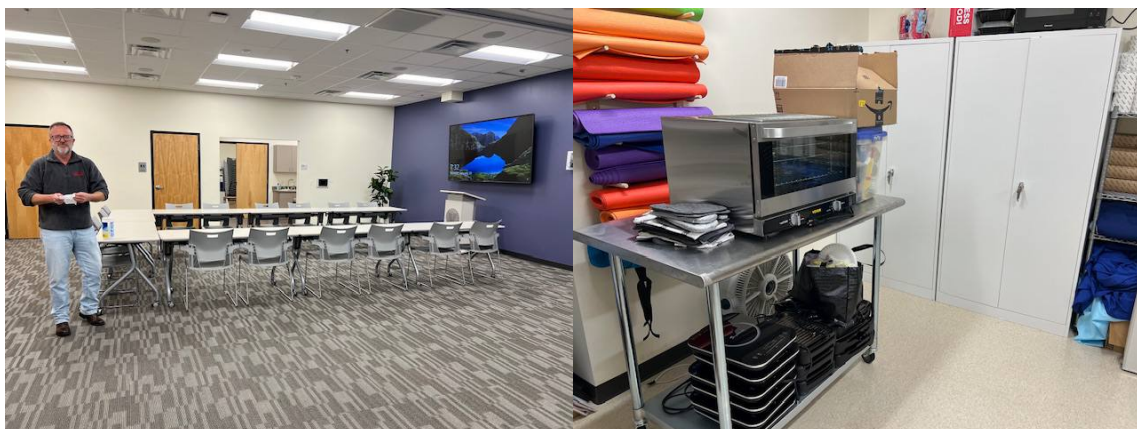
We appreciate the partnership with the Elks and the volunteers that make it happen!





We also wrapped up our Winter classes at the Steve A Cohen Military Family Clinic. Check out how we convert a conference room into a culinary classroom.

The next class there is tbd when they find a replacement for the program manager there that retired in February.







What Caught Our Eye ...

In mid-February, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) issued its report on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the most commonly used gauge of inflation. You can find the report here:

[BLS Report on Consumer Inflation \(Feb. 13, 2024\)](#)

Though it was buried deep in the announcement, one section of the report stood out (highlights added):

The index for all items less food and energy rose 3.9 percent over the past 12 months. The shelter index increased 6.0 percent over the last year, accounting for over two thirds of the total 12-month increase in the all items less food and energy index. Other indexes with **notable increases** over the last year **include motor vehicle insurance (+20.6 percent)**, recreation (+2.8 percent), personal care (+5.3 percent), and medical care (+1.1 percent).

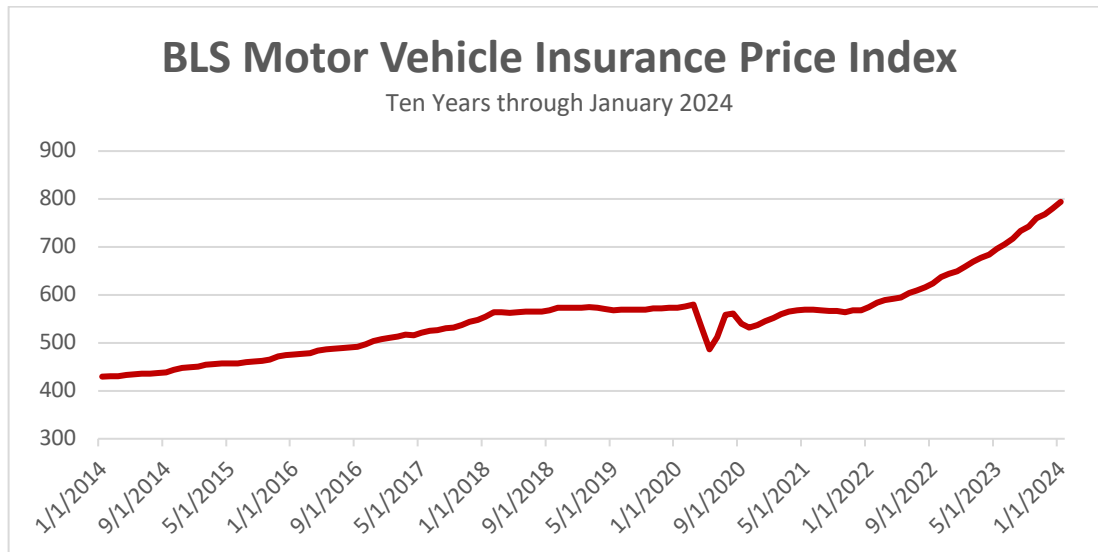
There was a nationwide increase in motor vehicle insurance of, on average, almost 21%! If that rate of price increases for auto insurance continues, rates will have doubled from one year ago in only two and a half more years.

As an aside: It is easy to figure out the time it takes to double something that is growing. It is called the “Rule of 72.” If you divide 72 by the rate of growth, the result is the approximate number of years until the thing that is growing doubles in size. Here is the math: $72 / 20.6 = 3.495$. So, if motor vehicle insurance prices are increasing at 20.6% each year, then it would take 3.495 years to double the premiums. Since we have already experienced a year of 20.6% growth in auto premiums, there are only 2.5 years left to go until this cost would have doubled.

The Rule of 72 is a net little trick that you can use to approximate how long it takes things to double.

Back to the subject at hand. This insurance price increase seemed especially specific. Living in Florida, we all know about difficulties with insurance. So, what is the big picture story with inflation and insurance? Let’s dig a little deeper and cash in some claims.

First, here is what the graph of auto insurance prices looks like over the last ten years. The data are from the BLS. (Next page.) Notice the nearly parabolic shape of the curve starting in 2022.



Since the low-point of the COVID-19 pandemic (May, 2020), the increase in auto insurance costs nationwide has been 48.5%. Looking back ten years, the increase has been 84.9%. These are truly exceptional figures, but what about the other kinds of insurance? How about medical insurance, household insurance, or the overall insurance picture?

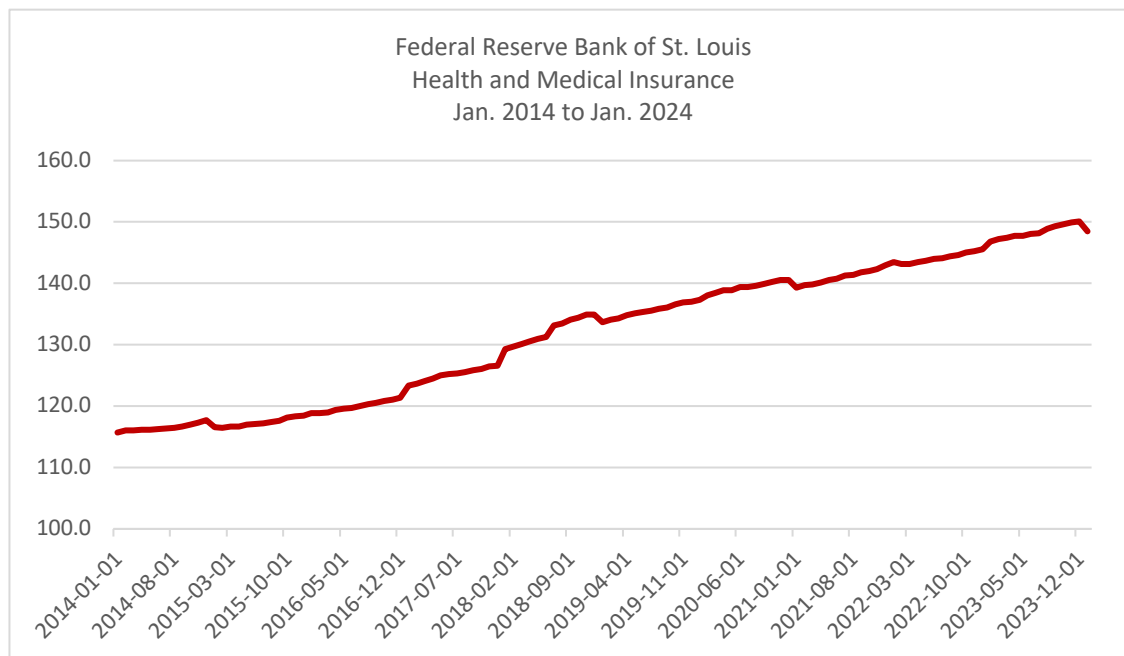
Taking private medical insurance first, we see that there has been a steady march upwards (we like to say, “lower left to upper right”); however, beware of the scale. In this case, the steady march from lower left to upper right has been more modest (+12% since the inception of this index almost ten years ago and just 6.3% since the same COVID-19 pandemic reference point (May, 2020). Here is the graph.





Still, we can use our little trick – the Rule of 72 – and figure out how long it would take for private medical insurance to double. As we did with the auto insurance calculation, let's use the January 2024 year over year comparison, which saw an increase of but 1.42%. You can see how flat the line is over the final year of the chart. Doing the Rule of 72 math, this rule of thumb implies that, if the inflation rate for private medical insurance remains the same as it was for the past year, it would take 51 years for these costs to double ($72 / 1.42 = 51$). That is better, no?

We are not quite finished with medical insurance. The graph above covers only private medical insurance, set's see if the story changes when looking at all medical and health insurance. Here is that graph, again using data compiled by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.



Over ten years, this cost category has grown 28.3%. For the period from May, 2020, to the current time, health and medical insurance costs have risen 6.9%. What does the Rule of 72 tell us? Well, looking at the graph, we should immediately note the decline in costs – a little downward hook at the upper right of the chart. With the gentle slope of the line, we should anticipate a long time to doubling. This conclusion is easily confirmed with the Rule of 72, which yields a doubling after 63.5 years ($72 / 1.13 = 63.5$).

So far, there is a bit of a mixed bag of results. But, we live in Florida. We have all heard of the insurance companies that are leaving the Sunshine State – or, rather, no longer providing homeowner insurance here. Hurricanes, tornados, and floods, oh my! Three major insurers



have left the state of Florida (Farmers Insurance, Bankers Insurance, and AIG's Lexington Insurance). More than half a dozen local Florida insurance companies have become insolvent since 2022. Many others are renewing only a small percentage of the policies that they had in force a couple of years ago. Now, these companies are exiting the state because of losses on natural disasters, losses capped by rate caps imposed on insurance companies by the regulators. The interesting consequence of this exodus: insurance premium inflation will be artificially capped by these circumstance. Similar circumstance have affected California, meaning that two of the three largest economies in the U.S. are experiencing real structural difficulties in the homeowners insurance arena.

With all that in mind, let's go to the data. Here are the increases:

- Since COVID-19 pandemic (May, 2020): 4.7%.
- Over the past 10 years: 14.0%.
- Doubling (Rule of 72): 17.6 years ($72 / 4.1 = 17.6$).

These increases are not terrible, but it appears that there has been a strong uptick in recent data on homeowners insurance. This inflation of homeowners' premiums likely reflects increasing home prices nationwide (more house value to insure) and pricing and regulatory issues in large states prone to large natural disasters (Florida and California spring easily to mind). Many of these individual components of the inflation gauges are, from time to time, volatile – suddenly lurching higher (rarely lower). As a result, it is difficult to quantify the amount of inflation to expect, as some price trends begin as others end.

But, one thing is certain: aggregate price declines are rare and short lived. For the people we at Epic-Cure® help, inflation of any kind is a silent thief, as income and wealth effects rarely keep pace with the harm done by price increases (or packaging decreases – “shrinkflation”) to those with little or no discretionary income and those on limited, fixed incomes. Inflation also forces people to make poor decisions regarding food, choosing less healthy, preservative packed and heavily processed foods that result in poor health outcomes and the consequently high costs to our healthcare system and which increase food insecurity and the number of those newly experiencing it.



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 fiscal years 2021 and 2022 have been released and are available upon request.
 - Also available on our website.
 - Click here to view: [Epic-Cure's Financial Statements](#)
- Please email your requests to Sunny Mulford: sunny.mulford@epic-cure.org