



The Almost Monthly Epic-Cure Newsletter

February 2023

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.

Ticket sales for our **Spectacular Speakeasy Casino Night** end on Tuesday, February 14th. Scan the QR code or click on this link to purchase tickets:

[Tickets for the Spectacular Speakeasy Casino Night with Epic-Cure](#)

This fun event will kick off our 2023 Capital Campaign (see the following page).

SPECTACULAR SPEAKEASY
CASINO NIGHT
A BENEFIT FOR EPIC-CURE

➤ SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19 ➤

JOIN US FROM 5-8PM AT TREASURY ON THE PLAZA FOR

Blackjack Tables • Roulette • Craps
Raffle Prizes • Live Music • Silent Auction
Cocktails, Beer & Wine • Hors D'oeuvres

DRESS CODE: BLACK TIE OR 1920S ATTIRE (OPTIONAL)

➤ **TICKETS: \$95 PER PERSON** ➤
PURCHASE TICKETS ON EVENTBRITE

➤ INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN EVENT SPONSOR?
CONTACT [SUPPORT@EPIC-CURE.ORG](mailto:support@epic-cure.org) ➤



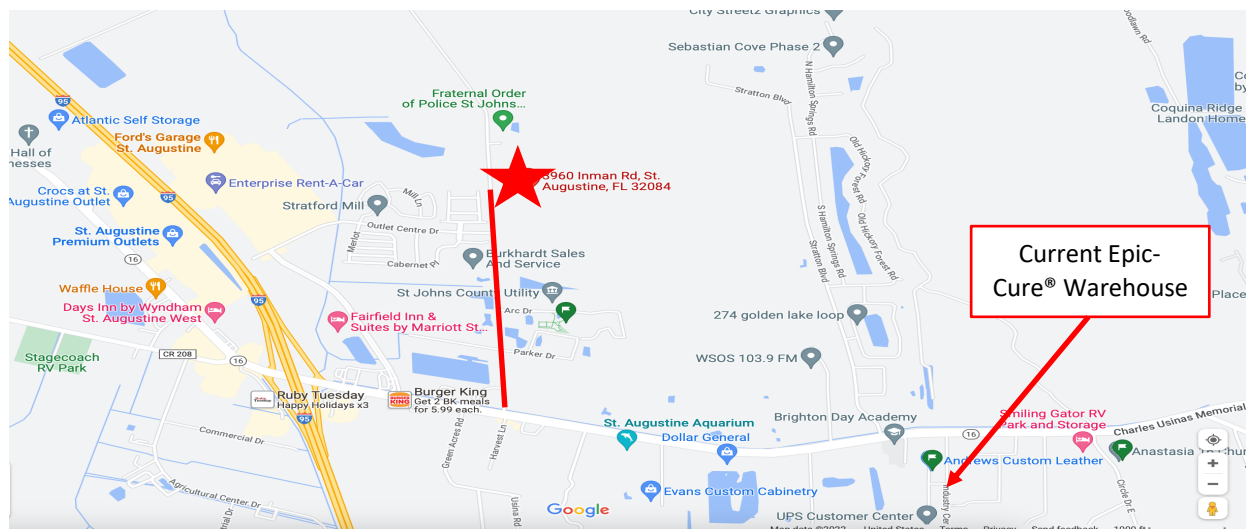
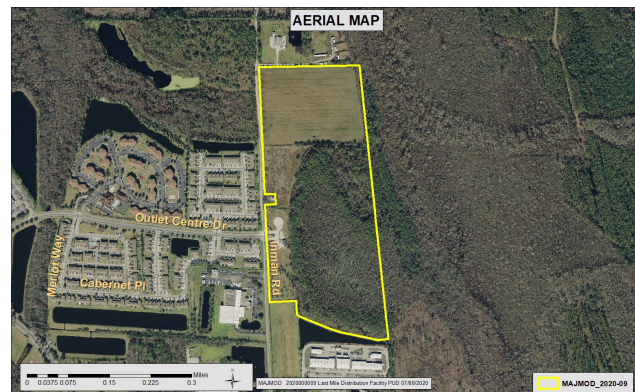
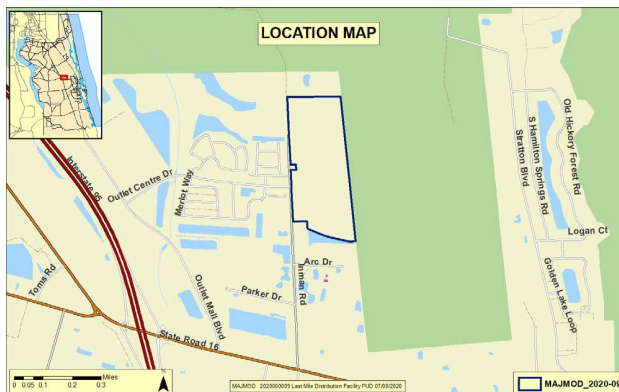
Epic-Cure's 2023 Capital Campaign

Building Acquisition: To Create a permanent and sustainable presence in St. Johns County to help the most vulnerable in our community.

We have identified a site and have negotiated with a builder that is willing to construct a 10,550 square foot warehouse with the required three-phase electrical capacity. This building will house Epic-Cure's St. Johns County operations as well as provide space for at least one other fantastic charity [Hopefull Handbags](#).

The site is located on Inman Road in St. Augustine, just off SR-16 near I-95 (exit 318) and is ideally situated for logistics – ready access by trucks for food and household goods collection as well as safe access by surface roads (35 mph) for staff, volunteers, and patrons (recipients).

The building will cost \$1,998,500 (includes construction and build-out costs) and will take approximately six to eight months to construct once some additional permitting has been achieved.



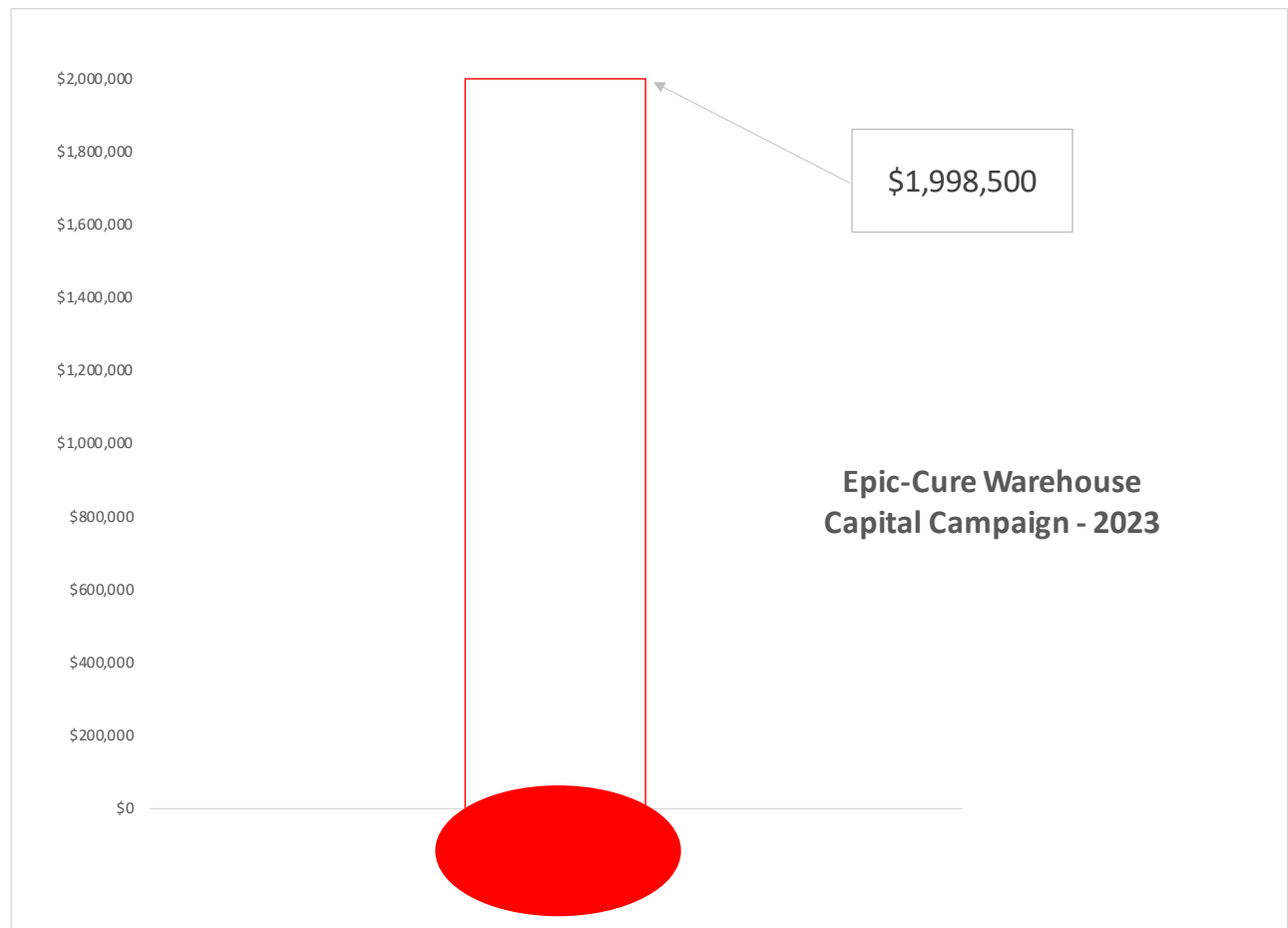


These pictures are representations of how the new warehouse may look. The ultimate design is still on the drawing boards.





As we progress in our capital campaign, we will update this graphic and share it with everyone.



Don't be discouraged by this graphic. We have only just begun this undertaking and expect to demonstrate progress before the next AMEC Newsletter!



Operations

From the Feeding America Website:

What is food waste?

Food waste is safe, high-quality food that is thrown away rather than eaten. Food waste occurs for a variety of reasons, including:

- Uneaten food that is thrown out at homes, stores, and restaurants

- Crops left in fields because of low crop prices or too many of the same crops being available

- Problems during the manufacturing and transportation of food

- Food not meeting retailers' standards for color and appearance

How much food waste is there in the United States?

Each year, 119 billion pounds of food is wasted in the United States. That equates to 130 billion meals and more than \$408 billion in food thrown away each year. Shockingly, nearly 40% of all food in America is wasted.

Food goes to waste at every stage of food production and distribution - from farmers to packers and shippers, from manufacturers to retailers to our homes. Food waste in our homes makes up about 39% of all food waste - about 42 billion pounds of food waste. While commercial food waste makes up about 61% of all food waste or 66 billion pounds of food waste. Feeding America focuses on reducing food waste on farms and in food service, manufacturing, and retail.

What is Feeding America doing about food waste?

Last year, the Feeding America network and our partners rescued 3.6 billion pounds of groceries. That food went directly to meals for people facing hunger. This makes Feeding America the largest food rescue organization in the country.

The response to what is Feeding America doing about food waste was a bit of a surprise since that's down from the 4 billion they reported rescuing in 2020 and 4.7 billion in 2021.

In a press release from Feeding Northeast Florida (FNF):

The Feeding America network is not immune from the impacts of inflation, with every aspect of food bank operations including purchasing food, transporting donated food, energy for cold storage, and other costs including fuel, wages, and even vehicle maintenance seeing significant increases. To close the gap and keep up with demand, food banks are purchasing nearly as much food as they did in 2021 but are now paying 40% more for those purchases. Feeding America projects that the food bank network will experience a 20% decrease in manufacturing donations and a 45% decrease in federal commodities in fiscal year 2022, running July 2021 to June 2022. Over the past six months, 55% of Feeding America food banks have reported their overall food donations are down. Without additional funding and federal commodities, food banks cannot be expected to meet this crisis and give their communities the support they need.



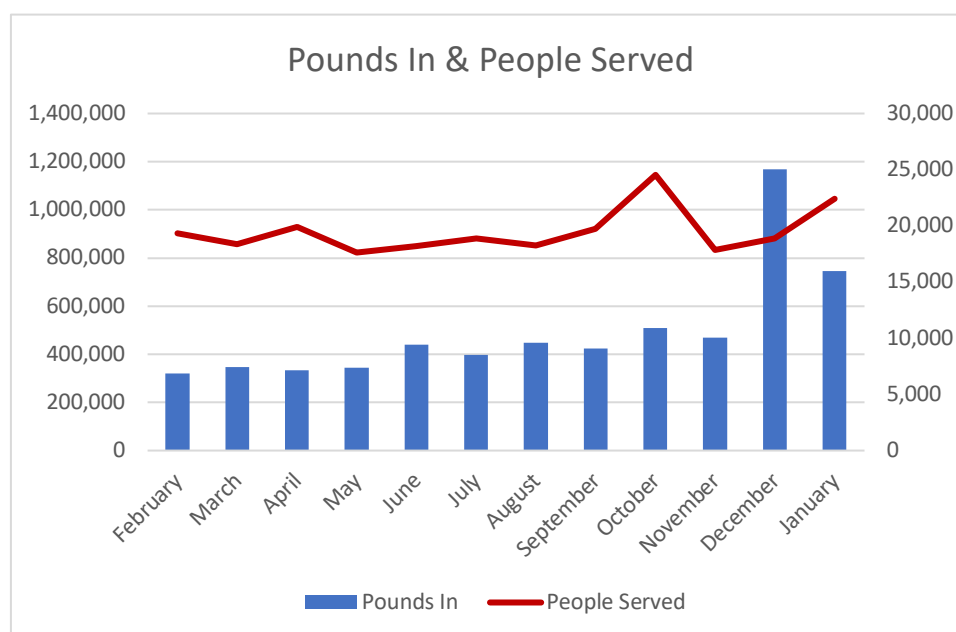
We have heard numerous times over the last year from both FNF and Farm Share that they have fewer trucks and drivers. They have asked us more and more to pick up food ourselves. Because we have three refrigerated trucks and amazing truck driving volunteers, we have been able to handle those logistics.

We have also seen the decline in food that FNF has available for agency partners. They assign agency partners specific days and locations for store pickups, but they also have a fleet of trucks that do store, manufacturer, distributor, and farm pickups. They then allocate food for mobile pantries, online agency shopping, agency hub shopping, and warehouse floor shopping. Since they have 300 partner agencies and work in 9 counties, less food spreads thin quickly.

Despite all that, we have been able to continue to grow by connecting to new sources. In 2022, 37% of all pounds of food rescued came from FNF. That is down from 77% in 2021 and 78% in 2020.

Each year, 119 billion pounds of food is wasted in the United States. We cannot do much about the 39% of food waste happening in homes, but we can on the 61% (66 billion pounds) happening on the commercial level. So, we continue to work non-stop on sourcing more food, maximizing utilization of the infrastructure we have built and continue to grow our infrastructure to increase our capacity to process, store, and distribute more food.

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



Notes on the graph:

FEMA December 605,728

FEMA January 302,390

FEMA is finally winding down (for now – there are rumors of more to come). The only things we have left, and are struggling to move, are pallets of individual hand sanitizing wipes and disposable coveralls. We have about 20 pallets of the “flood” cleaning buckets but those should be gone soon.



Sustain U.

It has been a busy start to the year with our cooking classes. The (not so) basics of grilling classes began at the **Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic** in January. The first class was basic hamburgers, hot dogs, and vegetables, and then they progressed to steaks with chimichurri sauce and pork chops with cannellini beans over greens.

Yes, that picture shows a conference room with a tarp to protect the carpet. We have learned that we can set up a fully functioning “mobile” kitchen anywhere if we have a sink and electricity. Induction burners, a convection oven on a rolling cart, and a cabinet to store our supplies are all we need.





5 Star Veterans Center - Two more veterans transitioned from 5 STAR Veterans Center to independent living in February. It is our honor to assist by providing everything they need to have a fully functional kitchen.



Our Winter series of classes at Woodlawn Terrace Apartments and the Boys and Girls Club are always a joy. Here Paul (below) is displaying Pork Chops with Mango Salsa and Blackberry Gastrique.





Growing to Serve:

Starting a School Garden Club to Provide Fresh Vegetables

Arthur Culbert, PhD – Executive Director [Compassionate St. Augustine](#)

I was an urban farmer in St. Louis, Missouri for ten years before moving to St. Augustine in 2019. Working with ten year olds as part of their 4th grade curriculum, we took a vacant urban lot and transformed it into an oasis of organic vegetables. We delivered our harvest weekly to two food pantries, eventually helping feed 10,000 hungry families in the community. [The Central West End Farm](#) (CWE Farm) was planted, and it flourishes still. My 4th graders dubbed the Farm a Gift Garden because what we grew was a gift to others.

Growing for Good video link: [Growing for Good](#)

Shortly after my arrival in St. Augustine, during the start of the pandemic, I reached out to the Lincolnville Community Garden (LCG) to obtain a garden bed. In my ten years of managing the CWE Farm I never tasted let alone ate our weekly bounty—it was all for the clients! I could not imagine what it would be like to raise and eat my own vegetables. I was so excited, finally growing vegetables for myself. That was short lived.

Fast forward. I meet Sunny as she is making the case for a new warehouse that I have become impassioned to help obtain for Epic-Cure. I decided that I could turn my bed into a gift garden and grow healthy organic vegetables for clients served by Epic-Cure.

The Veritas School is two blocks from the LCG. I made an appointment to meet the school head and described my idea to toil in the soil with students from the Veritas School to start a gift garden that would help feed those in need. They were all in. An after school garden club was formed and our gift garden was about to be planted.

After just a few months, our LCG initiative has grown from one bed to four beds. All of the vegetables we are growing, nurturing and harvesting on Monday are being delivered to the Epic-Cure warehouse on Tuesday morning. Students named the theme for their garden club “Growing to Serve”. Sunny participated in our first harvest and explained to students the mission of Epic-Cure and the amount of food waste there is in America. One thing that made an impression on the students was that one in four children go to bed hungry each night. For many this was really hard to comprehend.

Since the fall, students have taken pride in planting and nurturing our vegetables. They are so proud of their efforts to serve and supply Epic-Cure with over 100 pounds of organic vegetables to date. Just this week we had our largest harvest so far: 18 pounds of fresh lettuce, collard greens, mustard greens, spinach, and radishes. As one of the students shouted out during the harvest, “maybe we can start other Gift Gardens to help feed more people.” Just maybe we can! This is compassion - empathy in action.

See the farmers in action on the following page.



Volunteer Spotlight

Observations from 3 volunteers that have been with us since the very beginning.

By Janet McNabb



I am pleased to be one of the first volunteers at Epic-Cure, dating back to May 5, 2019, when they invited the public to see the movie “Wasted! The Story of Food Waste” at the Corazon Theater one rainy Sunday evening. The crowd was small, but Sunny and Ken Mulford were captivating with their idea of saving food from going to the landfill, feeding hungry people instead, and reducing the amount of methane gas causing climate change.

In the relatively short time since then, the all-volunteer organization has flourished. From the start-up at Industrial Center Road warehouse, it has grown to include another much larger warehouse in Palatka. From one distribution once a week, there are now many, many distributions all over St. Johns and Putnam counties every day except Wednesday and Sunday. From a few volunteers, the number has grown to 1500 volunteers in St. Augustine and Palatka.



While maintaining their regular paid jobs, Sunny and Ken somehow manage to keep all the balls in the air to keep everything running smoothly (they would add “most of the time!”). Besides their day-to-day busy routines, they are writing grants, finding new sources of food and new places to distribute, organizing volunteer parties, pursuing fund raising, and planning for a much larger owned, not rented, warehouse in St. Augustine. In addition, Sunny has started Sustain U, a program to teach underprivileged kids how to cook, and there is a waiting list of children who want to participate.

It’s amazing, admirable, and even exhausting just watching the Mulford’s. And it’s wonderful to participate in this growing endeavor. My small part is sorting produce on Tuesdays and helping distribute on Thursdays (Susan Rippe and I are the Dairy Divas) and writing the occasional article. Such a pleasure. Thank you, Sunny and Ken.



June Gutterson and Mike Frase

Mike and I first noticed Sunny and Ken Mulford while taking a break from another non-profit organization we volunteered with and looking around at other booths set up at the St. Augustine Amphitheater, on Saturday, April 27, 2019.

We were attracted to Epic-Cure by the organizers’ enthusiasm for their cause, and the novel idea (to us!) that there was so much food waste that could be reduced while helping hungry people. We took a brochure, provided our email address and waited to hear about their next event.

On Sunday, May 5, 2019, we attended a fund raising event at Corazon Theater, where we met other sponsors, supporters, volunteers, and organizers for Epic-Cure, watched an informative movie (Wasted! The Story of Food Waste) and enjoyed appetizers and desserts. This event was the beginning of our journey with Epic-Cure.

Mike and I started sorting in the St. Augustine warehouse on Sept 12, 2019, and even volunteered on Mike’s birthday the very next week! Standing, walking and lifting heavy boxes for two or more hours was difficult for us but we persevered after we saw all the patrons that came for the good food we had saved from the land fill.

When the pandemic started, in February 2020, we had to stay at home to keep ourselves safe, but we missed volunteering with Epic-Cure. We tried to help Epic-Cure by volunteering to pick up from grocery stores and bring it to Epic-Cure warehouse. This has worked out well for us, Epic-Cure and the donating stores.

Using Mike’s skills as a carpenter and handyman, we have assembled two compost bins, with the help of other likeminded volunteers. These compost bins will help local communities compost their kitchen and garden waste to be used as fertilizer for another garden.



The Geopolitics of Food:

Please look for the next installment of this series in the March edition of the Almost Monthly Epic-Cure® Newsletter. We will continue to investigate the intricacies of demographics, borders, the retrenchment of the American order, de-globalization, and the Russian modest as we grapple with the problems of food supplies and their implications for people right here in our community. We will next turn to chips – but not the crunchy and salty kind.

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