


Remember. Heal. Together.



**Shine a Light
Alabama**

RESOURCE GUIDE



Honoring lives lost
and comforting
those who mourn.

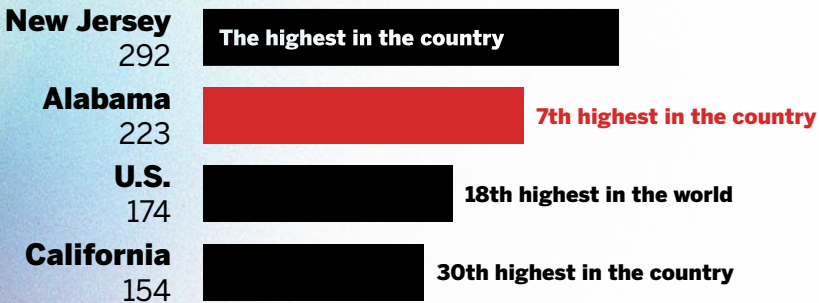
Between January 2020 and May 2021, nearly **600,000** Americans lost their lives to COVID-19.

In Alabama, we lost over **11,000** parents, spouses, children, and friends due to COVID-19.

TOTAL DEATHS * since January, 21, 2020



DEATH RATE * per 100,000 people



*CDC data accessed May 16, 2021

In addition to the loss of life from the pandemic, there were more deaths than normal due to other causes including chronic illness, overdose, suicide and violence. No family was untouched by loss.

During a time of isolation, we have had limited ways to memorialize, honor lives, and experience community and family support.

Every life lost was the light of someone's life.

Many of us were not able to hold the hands of our loved ones or say goodbye.

We were not able to gather and tell the stories or sing the songs that help us remember.

Too often we could not feel the touch of community.

**But, turning loss
toward light is within
our reach.**



“

I was not able to say goodbye to my brother Jerome. His death was unexpected. We were both hospitalized with COVID-19 at the time. From what I had been told, Jerome was beginning to improve. We were expecting he would make it out fine. Then a day or two went by and I got totally different news.

By the time I was discharged, my mom didn't think I was physically well enough to attend the service. I was able to watch it by Facebook Live, but of course, that wasn't the same. I want to honor his memory by continuing to be an uncle to his three sons, my nephews. That's what he would have wanted.

”

Dewayne Reaves
Montgomery, Alabama

Dewayne Reaves' brother Jerome Reaves, a 51-year-old father of three sons, died in October of 2020.

Shine a Light—for those we've lost

Familiar ways to remember and mourn may have slipped by because of pandemic safety measures and the isolation we all experienced. But it's not too late.

Our traditions and rituals around death—as different as they might be—all provide experiences that help people mourn and heal, including:

- Moments that give us permission to grieve
- Music and eulogies honoring the person who has died
- Visible support and the presence of the community
- Remembrance and storytelling that carries legacy forward

Despite the uncertainty we all feel as we attempt to rebuild our communities, we can make very firm commitments to do the worthy work of honoring lives lost, tending to our own grief, and caring for suffering families.

By choosing to take these actions, we can move from loss toward light...

“

I lost my husband many years ago when the girls were young. We had to learn to talk to each other about their dad's death. At first each of us was afraid to bring it up. We were afraid of upsetting each other. But we learned that we really had to talk to each other about it—and not avoid it. When we started really talking, things got better. So we knew when Mom and Dad died that talking about it and sharing stories and memories really helps.

The graveside services and gathering afterwards were just for family. But people in the community who couldn't visit were good about sending us cards and letters with memories and stories about Mom and Dad. Sharing memories really helped.

”

Pam Jordan
Elba, Alabama

Pam lost her parents, Ed and Peggy Compton, to COVID-19 just four days apart in November 2020.



We Can Each Do Something.

1 Commit.

Participate in
Shine a Light Alabama.

2 Remember.

Organize a Candle Lighting.

3 Tell the Story.

Share memories of your
loved ones and help collect
the stories of others.

4 Don't Go It Alone.

Explore resources and
services.

5 Build Legacy.

Support community service
and civic engagement.

1 Commit.

Participate in Shine a Light Alabama.

We won't randomly start honoring loved ones we've lost. We won't accidentally start paying attention to our grief or the grief of our neighbors. These are intentional acts that require personal commitment. We invite you to stop by **ShineAlabama.org** as a first step.

On that site, we will connect you with music, art, and a memorial wall dedicated to honoring our loved ones in creative ways. We will connect you with local and national health, grief, and mental wellness resources. Those who sign up on the site will be notified as events related to Shine a Light Alabama are organized. You can also use the site to tell us about the work you are doing in your local community.

Share the website with family and friends! Use **#ShineAlabama** when posting on your social media so others can find these resources.



ShineAlabama.org

SCAN THE QR CODE
WITH YOUR PHONE CAMERA
OR A QR CODE APP

2 Remember.

Organize a Candle Lighting.

1. Reflect.

- Who did you lose in your family or community?
- What did you miss in not being able to say goodbye to your loved one(s) like you normally would have?
- What do you miss most about those you lost?
- What is the one quality that is most memorable to you about those you lost?
- Is there a song that reminds you of the person you lost?
- What other families do you know who are grieving?

2. Choose the date and place for the Candle Lighting.

We recommend a place that is both comfortable and publicly visible to others: your front porch, steps, or lawn, or a nearby park or safe parking lot.

3. Invite people to the Candle Lighting or incorporate a Candle Lighting into a gathering already planned.

You can take these steps alone, gathered with loved ones, or on a particular day in coordination with neighbors in your community. You can even add the Candle Lighting to an activity or event you already had scheduled like a gathering for your family, church members, or friends.

4. Shine a Light. We invite you to pause and honor your loved one(s) and others lost in this tragedy. All you need to participate is this booklet or the version available on the website, a candle, and the time. This guide includes a sample candle lighting guide for you to consider.

3 Tell the Story.

Share memories of your loved ones and help collect the stories of others.

What **object** reminds you most of the person you lost?

At **ShineAlabama.org** there is a special memorial page with visual tributes to loved ones lost during the pandemic, whether to COVID-19 or other causes. Adding a memorial tribute to your loved one is simple.

At **ShineAlabama.org/Remember** you can name the person you want to memorialize, share a photo of your memory object and briefly tell why that object represents a special memory. Check out the following websites for other ways you can directly collect stories and memories, save them, and share them.

StoryCorps (storycorps.org)

StoryCorps' mission is to record, preserve, and share the stories of Americans from all backgrounds and beliefs. They collect interviews created by regular people, which are archived at the Library of Congress.

Story Center (storycenter.org)

Story Center offers spaces, creative workshops and online public programs to help people tell and share their stories. You can find resources about storytelling and memories related to the pandemic at their website. (tiny.one/v6drpv6y)

4 Don't Go It Alone.

Explore resources and services.

Saying goodbye to our loved ones is a life-altering

experience. Learning to live without them can be even harder.

Over the last year the grief process became even more difficult.

We weren't able to access many of the things that help us process loss—human touch, inspiring live music, the sounds of other voices nearby, to name a few.

We don't have to do this alone. We can reach out and connect with people we trust. When we have needs that seem particularly challenging, we can ask for help. Please explore the following resources. You can also access a larger list at **ShineAlabama.org**.

Loss and Grief Resources

The Amelia Center (childreusal.org/amelia-center)

UAB Pastoral Care Grief Resources (tiny.one/fv4bdujj)

NAMI COVID-19 Resources (tiny.one/2ctffjd2)

CDC COVID-19 Grief and Loss Resources (tiny.one/c98p4huc)

The Dougy Center (dougy.org/resources)

Sesame Street in Communities Helping Kids Grieve (tiny.one/jnmcjtxr)

COVID-19 Health Information

Vaccine information (vaccines.gov)

COVID-19 Updates (coronavirus.gov)

Find a Vaccine Text your zip code to GETVAX (438829) for vaccine locations near you

CDC COVID-19 Information (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov)

UAB Clinic for Post-COVID Treatment (205-975-1881)

for COVID survivors with symptoms lasting more than 4 weeks

Mental Wellness

NAMI Alabama Support for families affected by mental illness (namialabama.org)

National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800) 273-TALK (8255)

55 Mental Health Resources for People of Color (tiny.one/ybndnus4)

5 Build Legacy.

Support community service and civic engagement.

Alabama's death rate from COVID-19 was the **7th highest** in the nation.* The **11,000+** Alabamians lost to the virus is the equivalent of experiencing 30 commercial jet plane crashes with no survivors within a 15-month period. Our communities also suffered more deaths from overdose, suicide, and gun violence during this same period. So much loss takes a heavy toll. *CDC on 05/16/21

The pandemic revealed absent safety nets, simmering hate and division, and lethal gaps in healthcare. The virus hit some harder than others—many of us were more vulnerable based on age, race, family obligations, or type of job. It took a much higher toll on our elders; rural neighbors with less access to healthcare; frontline workers; and those without health insurance. Even people outside of these categories became critically ill.

We can honor the lives lost by closing the healthcare gaps that made Alabama's death rate so high. Let's carry forward the legacies of our loved ones by engaging our communities—to make them stronger, more resilient, and more just.

Community Service

The Wellness Coalition (thewellnesscoalition.org)

Vaccination Campaign (madetosave.org)

Civic Engagement

Cover Alabama Coalition (coveralabama.org)

a nonpartisan alliance advocating for the state of Alabama to provide quality, affordable health coverage to its residents and implement a sustainable healthcare system

Alabama Forward (alforward.org)

a diverse coalition of 501(C)(3) civic groups working to ensure that every Alabamian can engage in the democratic process

Resources for Remembrance Work

As we developed Shine A Light Alabama, we were inspired by critical remembrance work already being done by organizations near and far. Some of those torchbearers have even taken time to be thought partners with us, encouraging us at critical moments during the development of this effort. Their willingness to share their time and light helped spark an effort that we hope brings greater healing to our neighbors. We encourage you to take a moment to review their important work.

Center for Inclusion and Belonging

(inclusion.americanimmigrationcouncil.org)

Equal Justice Initiative Community Remembrance Project

(eji.org/projects/community-remembrance-project)

Facing History and Ourselves

(facinghistory.org)

Mediators Beyond Borders/The Trust Network

(mediatorsbeyondborders.org/trust)

OnBeing Civil Conversations & Social Healing

(onbeing.org/civil-conversations-project)

Welcoming America

(welcomingamerica.org)

Western States Center

(westernstatescenter.org)



Candle Lighting Guide

Welcome Those Who Have Gathered

Name the Person/People Being Recognized

**Share Music that Connects You to your Loved One(s)
(ShineAlabama.org has a special collection of music)**

Light the Candle

Pray/Sit Still

**Share Stories about Your Loved One(s)
Invite Those Gathered to Share Stories**

Activity for Children Who Are Present

Music, Poem, or other Expression

Final Expression of Thanks

Close

Involving young people and children in a Candle Lighting

Teens and children are experiencing the grief of loss of family members, neighbors and community members, too. Even young children know there is a new sickness and a need to protect people. Most children and teens are aware of the large numbers of deaths from COVID-19, even if it didn't affect their family directly. It may seem very challenging to engage young people in difficult conversations, but there are creative and healthy ways to include them.

The Candle Lightings that families or groups choose to do can include young people in appropriate ways—so they can express grief, feel empathy, and show compassion themselves.

Here are some ideas:

- Ask older children or teens to be the official photographer or videographer and social media specialist for your family or group's Candle Lighting. This is their lane!
- Teens can create a playlist of favorite music of a lost loved one or a playlist of music that expresses their sadness or brings them comfort. These are perfect to include in a Candle Lighting.
- Teens can also help a family create a slide show of important photos and children can help make selections.
- Children can draw pictures or make cards for people who are grieving, giving them a specific way they can show compassion.
- The activities in the back of this booklet can engage young people and adults.
- Visit the **Dougy Center** (dougycenter.org) to find resources to help families with children and teens who have experienced grief.



How to Safely Participate in Shine a Light Alabama

COVID-19 Safety



If you've been fully vaccinated, you can

- Gather in a home or private setting without a mask with other fully vaccinated people of any age.
- Visit inside a home or private setting without a mask with one household of unvaccinated people who are not at risk for severe illness.



Small Gatherings

Small gatherings are informal in nature and may occur with family and friends you regularly socialize with, often at someone's residence.

Steps Everyone Can Take to Make Small Gatherings Safer

- Wear a mask that has two or more layers over your mouth and nose.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others who do not live with you.
- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands.



Large Gatherings

Large gatherings bring together many people from multiple households in a private or public space.

Steps Everyone Can Take to Make Large Gatherings Safer

- Try to host memorial events in outdoor settings. Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated indoor spaces
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others who do not live with you
- Wear a mask that has two or more layers over your mouth and nose



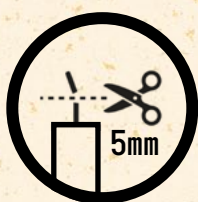
How to Safely Participate in Shine a Light Alabama

Fire Safety



Warning!

To prevent fire and serious injury, burn candle within sight. Keep away from drafts and vibrations. Keep out of reach of children and pets. Never burn candle on or near anything that can catch fire.

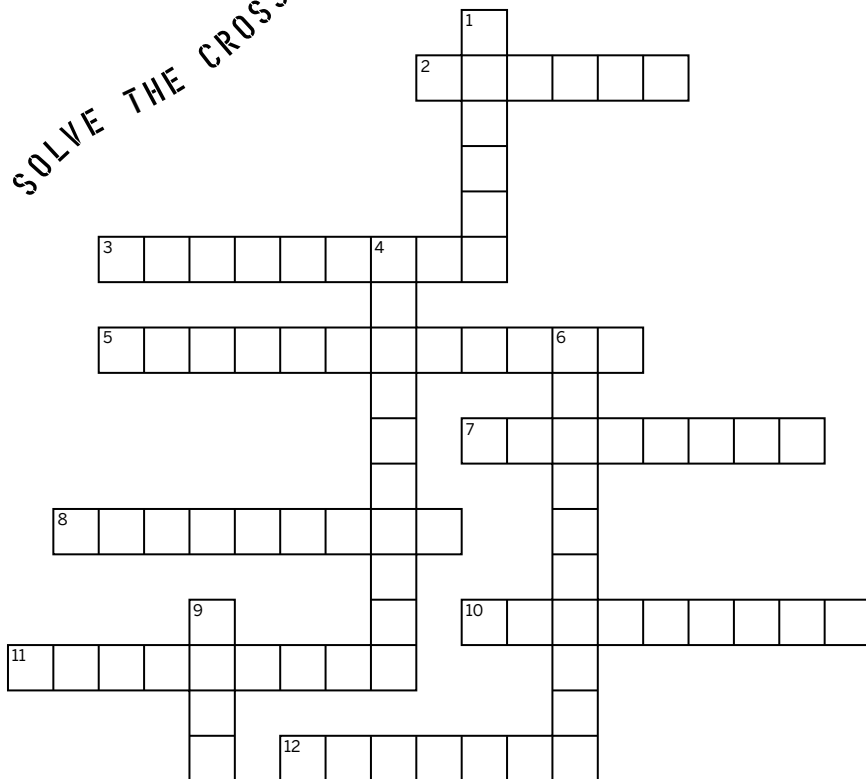


Burn Instructions

Make sure wick is no longer than 5mm before lighting. Keep candle free of any foreign materials, including matches and wick trimmings. Only burn the candle on a level, fire resistant surface. Do not burn the candle for more than 4 hours at a time.

SOLVE THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Find answers on the next page!



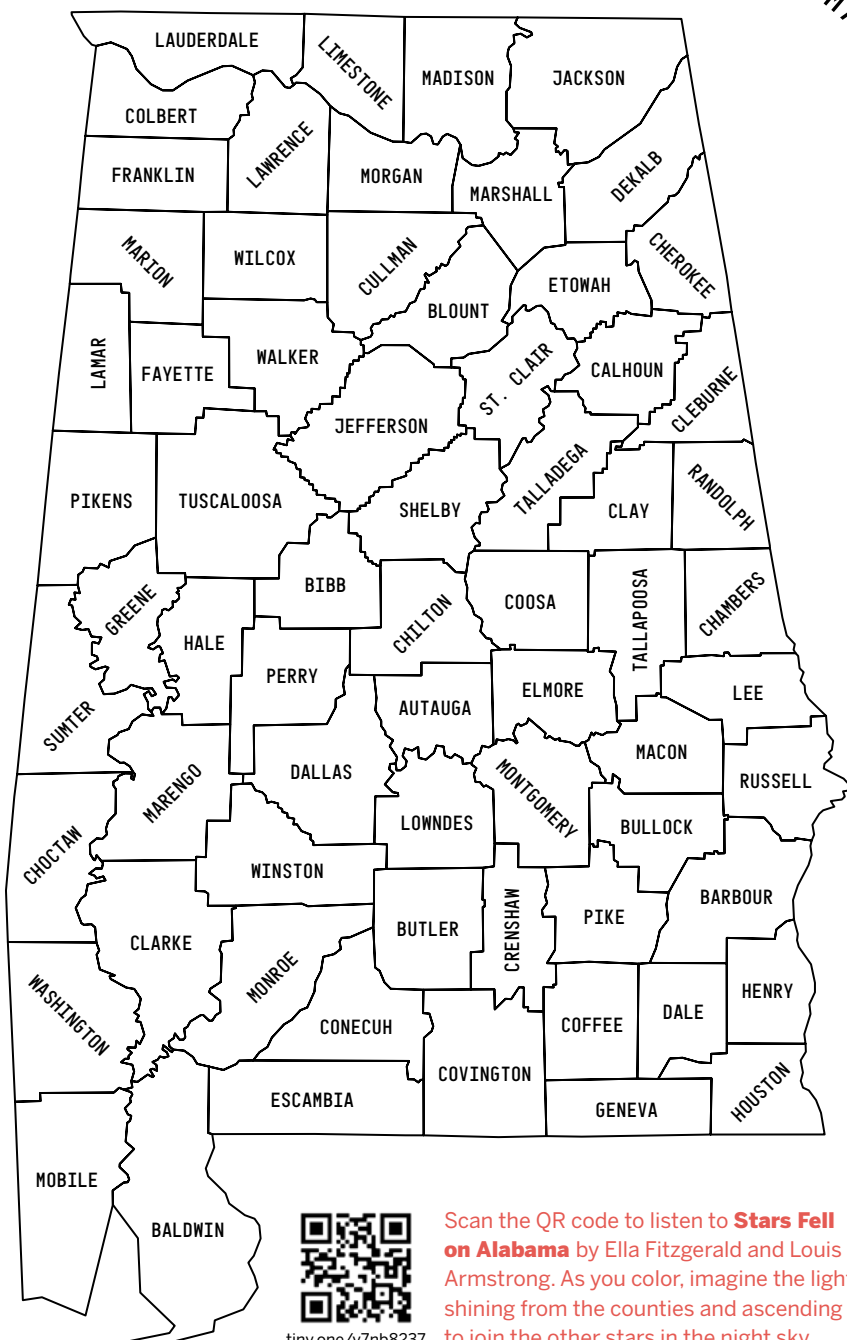
ACROSS

2. Something transmitted by or received from an ancestor, predecessor, or the past
3. Nearness between two things
5. A community effort honoring lives lost and comforting those who mourn
7. Something erected in memory of a person or event
8. Able to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, and tragedy
10. Where we live or find fellowship with others
11. A quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone
12. The ability to understand and share the feelings of another

DOWN

1. A recollection of a past event, time or person
4. To brighten or supply with light
6. Capital city of Alabama
9. A bundle of fibers twisted or braided so it can draw up fuel to supply a flame

COLOR THE COUNTIES OF ALABAMA



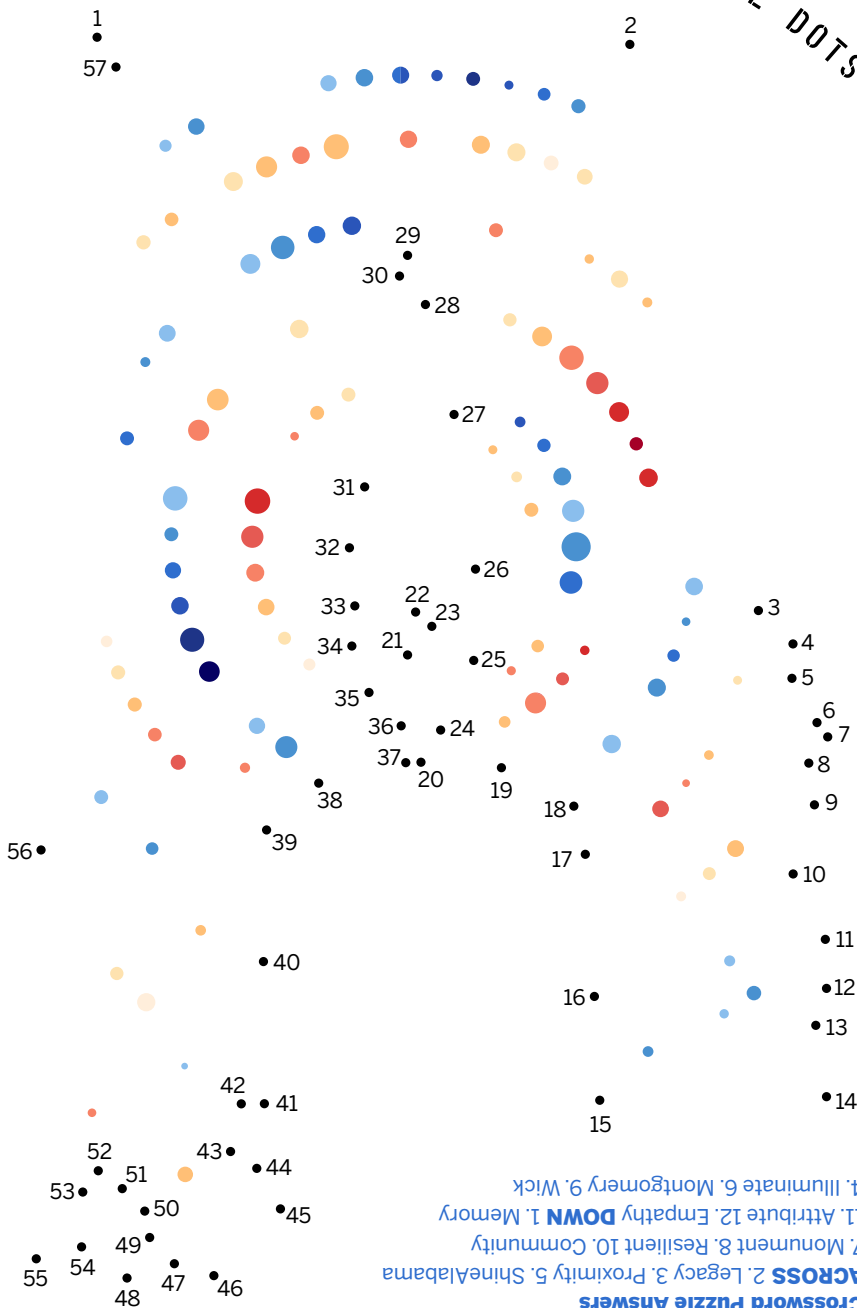
tiny.one/y7nb8237

Scan the QR code to listen to **Stars Fell on Alabama** by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. As you color, imagine the lights shining from the counties and ascending to join the other stars in the night sky.

I'M GRIEVING BECAUSE...

I FIND COMFORT IN...

SHINE ALABAMA BY CONNECTING THE DOTS



Thank you for Shining a Light in Alabama.

Please share photos of your Candle Lighting and use the hashtag **#ShineAlabama** to honor lives lost and comfort others who mourn. Thank you for sharing your light.

We would love to hear from you. Visit us at **ShineAlabama.org** for additional resources and ways to engage. Email us at **info@ShineAlabama.org** if you have suggestions or questions.



@shinealabama



@shinealightalabama



@shinealabama



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**ALABAMA
FORWARD**

Shine a Light Alabama is project of Alabama Forward, a diverse coalition of 501(C)(3) civic groups working to ensure that every Alabamian can engage in the democratic process. Learn more at **alforward.org**