

# Utah Communities Unite for “A Light to Remember” International Overdose Awareness Day

**Ashley Yaughner and Mersades Morgan**

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Communities around the world and across Utah will come together in recognition of [International Overdose Awareness Day](#) to honor those who have died or suffered permanent injury due to substance-related overdose.

Observed each year on August 31, International Overdose Awareness Day is the world's largest campaign dedicated to ending overdose, reducing the stigma associated with substance use and overdose deaths, and acknowledging the grief of families and communities left behind. It is a day to remember those lost while inspiring hope through education, prevention, treatment, and recovery.

“Substance-related overdose continues to affect families in every community,” said Ashley Yaughner, Utah State University Extension associate professor of health and wellness. “Behind every statistic is a son or daughter, parent, sibling, friend, coworker, or neighbor whose life has been forever changed. In southeastern Utah, we know these stories personally, making it more important than ever to come together with compassion, understanding, and hope.”

This year marks the fifth anniversary of Carbon and Emery counties’ “A Light to Remember” event. What began as a small community remembrance has grown into a meaningful tradition where individuals and families gather to remember loved ones, support those in recovery, learn life-saving overdose-prevention skills, and connect with local organizations dedicated to improving community health and well-being. Each luminary lit represents a life remembered, each message on the remembrance wall reminds families they are not alone, and each

conversation helps reduce the stigma surrounding substance use disorders and overdose.

“Every luminary tells a story, every name represents a life that mattered, and every person who attends helps create a community where grief is met with compassion instead of silence,” said Yaughner. “This event reminds us that no family should have to grieve alone. Together, we can honor those we have lost, support those still struggling, celebrate recovery, and inspire hope for the future.”

Mersades Morgan with Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness encourages community members to attend, hear shared memories, and support one another.

“Recovery is possible, overdose deaths are preventable, and every person deserves dignity, compassion, and support,” said Morgan. “Whether you have experienced loss, are in recovery, want to support someone you love, work in prevention, or simply want to learn how to help, we invite you to join us as we remember, reflect, and stand together.”

[The Carbon and Emery counties event](#), held at Huntington State Park, will feature free meals from local favorites Gettin' Our Smoke On and Angel's Craving Food Truck. Attendees will have the opportunity to create personalized luminaries in memory of loved ones, hear memories of recovery and hope, contribute messages to the community remembrance wall, receive free Naloxone (Narcan) education and kits, connect with local prevention, treatment, recovery, and mental health organizations, and spend an evening surrounded by a community committed to healing, hope, and remembrance. The event is free and open to the public. Free meals and event swag will be available for the first 150 adult attendees and the first 100 youth attendees, and free transportation is available.

Additional events around the state include:

- \* South Salt Lake County, August 31, 5-9 p.m., Wheeler Farm, Murray
- \* Tooele County, August 31, 7-9 p.m., Stansbury Park Clubhouse
- \* Vernal, August 31, 7-9 p.m., Colton Pavilion
- \* Salt Lake City, August 31, 6-9 p.m., Utah State Capitol

To learn more about “A Light to Remember” events throughout Utah, visit [facebook.com/usuHEART](https://facebook.com/usuHEART), [alighttoremember.life](https://alighttoremember.life), or reach out to [Michelle Church](#), executive director of “A Light to Remember.”

## Writers and Contacts

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