

James L. Thornton
Memorial Scholarship Fund 24th Year

Lovell and Ora Thornton along with the James L. Thornton Memorial Scholarship Fund are offering scholarships to 2025-2026 graduating seniors of Lithonia High School, Martin Luther King, Jr. High School, Miller Grove High School and Arabia Mountain High School, in honor of their late son James Lovell Thornton.

A little information about James L. Thornton:

James was a rising senior at Lithonia High School. He was a young man filled with dreams, hope, promise, love and possibilities. James was an honor student, member of Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID), BETA Club, peer mediators, the marching band, and Aviation Career Enrichment (ACE). He was an usher at The Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church, attended Sunday School, a homeless shelter volunteer, a friend to many and a son. He enjoyed sports, especially baseball and was an avid Braves and Falcons fan. He looked forward to his senior year, a year that we all strive for when beginning our educational journey. What a year it was going to become, Class of 2003 (C.O. '03), we could expect to hear all year as he marched towards the long awaited graduation. Tragedy struck James with an unrelenting blow, such that it was felt by many and would change the lives of many more.

On August 10, 2002 two days before beginning his senior year James was fatally wounded in a car incident. He was a backseat passenger in a vehicle that was traveling too fast and resulted in an accident and that resulted in his injuries and death.

James never had the opportunity to attend a single day of his senior year with his classmates. He would never be able to walk the halls of the school and hear the echoing rally cry of "C.O. '03". His dreams and ours came to an abrupt end that day in August, a future changed in an instant. Life can be unpredictable and unforgiving, unfortunate, and untimely events can change lives forever. James was prepared for life after his earthly life, because he had given himself to Christ. This in some way lessens our pain and gives us hope.

Family, friends, and former classmates sorely miss him. We want to share with other seniors who possess similar desires and dreams as James, the opportunity to pursue their dreams through higher education. Along with commonly shared dreams and desires, as parents we believe it is important to be responsible, respectful and reliable. We stressed safety as a key component of James' life. This idea of safety was for him as well as those entrusted to his care.

2024-2025 recipients of the James L. Thornton Memorial Scholarship:

1st place Aubrey Allen (\$3,825), attending University of Southern California

2nd place Taylor Brown (\$2,825), attending Alabama State University

3rd place Taryn Hunt (\$1,825), attending Spelman College

(each recipient attended Arabia Mountain High School)

As you complete the attached application, consider this as an important step towards furthering your education, securing your future, and realizing your dreams.

The James L. Thornton Memorial Scholarship

Qualifications

The student applicant must:

Be a graduating senior from one of the following schools (Lithonia High School, Martin Luther King, Jr. High School, Miller Grove High School, Arabia Mountain High School) with a minimum 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) and be in good standing and conduct.

Show proof of registration to an accredited institution of higher learning (this is needed prior to receiving a check, *not* needed for the application process).

If you are a licensed driver, must not have any moving violations after March of 2025.

Requirements

A 300 to 500 word typed “**double-spaced**” essay on the theme of increasing/improving safety in any mode of transportation such as pedestrian, planes, automobiles, bicycles, trains, boats, etc. (**these are only examples**):

- I would improve pedestrian safety by...
- Drivers of automobiles can be more responsible...
- Safety improvements can be made in...
- Government agencies should mandate boating safety by...
- As a passenger I should be...

The essay can also address the importance of being a responsible passenger or operator of a vehicle.

Essays with completed application must be postmarked by midnight March 21, 2026.

Judging Guidelines:

Essays will be judged on content, theme development and grammar.

- Content: does the essay present accurate, relevant and practical information as it relates to the chosen topic, are there footnotes or references denoted
- Theme Development: does the essay flow around the chosen topic; opening, body and conclusion
- Grammar: punctuation, spelling, sentence structure.....

All essays become the property of the James L. Thornton Memorial Scholarship Fund.

** Our judges have made it a point in stressing all of the above mentioned criteria during their evaluation process. It is strongly recommended that you have one of your teachers or a parent review your application and essay prior to submission.

** Judges will be processing the first 25 applications received (as a starting point) in selecting the 3 recipients for the 2025-2026 awards, be sure to get your application and essay postmarked and submitted early.

James L. Thornton Memorial Scholarship Application 24th Year.

All essays become the property of the James L. Thornton Memorial Foundation.

Applicant: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

City _____, State _____ Zip _____

High School: _____ GPA: _____ Email: _____

List schools to which you are applying:

Have you chosen a major (optional): _____

Do you possess a driver's license? Yes / No

Driver's License State and Number: _____

Qualification

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Show proof of registration to an accredited institution of higher learning (needed prior to receiving a check, **not needed for the application process**).

If you are a licensed driver, must not have any moving violations after March 2025.

Requirements

A 300 to 500 word typed double-spaced essay on the theme of increasing/improving safety in different modes of transportation such as (only examples): pedestrian, planes, automobiles, bicycle, skateboards, trains, boat, etc. The essay can also address the importance of being a responsible passenger or operator of a vehicle.

Essays with completed application must be postmarked by midnight March 21, 2026

I have read the application and agree to the terms outlined therein. I agree to release any information related to driver's information, GPA and schools to which I am accepted.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mail Completed Application and Essay to:

James L. Thornton Memorial Scholarship

P.O. Box 2076

Lithonia, GA 30058