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# Charles Michael "Mike" Fulenwider

**Sept. 11, 1947 - March 29, 2020**

Charles Michael "Mike" Fulenwider, 72, of Morganton passed away Sunday, March 29, 2020. Born in Georgia on September 11, 1947, he was the son of Helen Wright Fulenwider Patton and the late Judge Verbon Fulenwider.

Mike was owner and CEO of Fulenwider Enterprises, a franchisee of KFC and Taco Bell with 108 restaurants in seven states. Mike (also known as "Big Mike" by his company) loved telling the story of how he got started in the KFC business as a fry cook at his father's KFC in 1965. Mike always considered everyone in his company as family and enjoyed talking with employees, one at a time, when he visited restaurants. He delighted in helping others reach their full potential and enjoyed giving people opportunities to grow professionally and personally. Mike had many passions: education, entrepreneurship, running, photography, music, planting flowers (he loved tulips), driving cars, and following Formula 1 racing. Valuing honesty, hard work and integrity above all, he truly was a force of nature. Furthermore, Mike was not afraid to take risks and made his own way through hard work, all the while helping many others along the way.

Mike had a vision to improve the future of Morganton by giving back to the community. He expressed that vision through serving on multiple boards at the local and state levels, including Grace Hospital and our Governor's board. Mike also took

and state levels, including Grace Hospital and our Governor's board. Mike also took the time to meet with local entrepreneurs as they started a business or needed assistance with running their own operations.

By his friends and colleagues, Mike will be remembered for his humor and ability to make others laugh.

In addition to his mother, Mike is survived by his wife, Joella Breeden Fulenwider; son, Michael Fulenwider and wife, Jen; daughters, Elle Fulenwider Engstrom and husband, Eric, and Virginia Fulenwider Edwards and husband, Bobby; grandchildren, Hannah Fulenwider, Charlotte Fulenwider, Michael Fulenwider, Sara Frances Engstrom, and Olivia Fulenwider; brother, Russ Fulenwider; and sister, Judy Buchly and husband, Bill.

A celebration of Mike's life will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Morganton's Downtown Development Association/Small Business Development, P.O. Box 3448 Morganton, NC 28680 or to First United Methodist Church of Morganton, 200 N. King St., Morganton, NC 28655.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

# Tribute Wall

I lived in Morganton all during my childhood through my teenage years. Mike lived on the street by West Park Drive. I remember his go cart and later his GTO. He dated my sister, Judy Smith and his was very fond of him. My condolences to his family. The late Steve Gregory gave caught me up on all our friends and talked very kindly about Mike. This makes me sad.' Becky Smith Carey

–Becky Carey



–frannie