

Sheriff Michael Alan Helmig (1959-2026)

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Mike was born on July 25, 1959 to Alan T. Helmig, a trucking company executive, and Donna Jean (Pool) Helmig. He attended Conner Senior High School where he played fullback on their football team and graduated in 1977.

By 1981, his father was working for Boone County. Alan was appointed to Deputy Jailer in 1983 and by April 23, 1987, was a supervisor in their detention facility.

Mike joined the Boone County Sheriff's Office January 1, 1982. He attended on his own the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training, five years before the state offered basic training courses designed for deputy sheriffs. He was assigned to the Road Patrol. At the time, the Office employed six employees.

On July 25, 1983, Patrolman Helmig received a tip from an informant that led to the largest ever seizure of marijuana plants in Boone County. By August 1991, he was promoted to Sergeant, then to Lieutenant. On July 9, 1993, Lieutenant Helmig and Deputy Les Hill went airborne in a helicopter, found three marijuana fields, and destroyed all three. In his first 12 years, he served in patrol, detective, and administration functions and was appointed Chief Deputy in January 1994.

On May 15, 1997, Sheriff Ronald Kenner died after suffering a brain aneurism. Chief Deputy Helmig was appointed to the position of Sheriff to finish out his term on May 20th, thereby becoming the first sheriff in Kentucky to rise through all the ranks. His first statement was his intention to run the department with involvement with the community. Sheriff Helmig's colleagues said he displayed a dedication to punctuality, discipline, and professionalism, arguing that he set an example for everyone else. Within 17 months, he increased courthouse security, put more deputies on the street, increased drunk driving arrests, and aggressively enforced drug laws.

In his first election, he was up against a friend, colleague, and very experienced law enforcement officer. His opposition wanted to streamline the Sheriff's Office by eliminating functions similar to those of the Police Department. Sheriff Helmig took the position that, "It takes all of us working together to get the job done." This was a concept first manifested by his county's namesake, Daniel Boone, and Kenton

County's namesake, Simon Kenton, in the 18th Century and is almost a word for word the definition of the City of Cincinnati's "Juncta Juvant" in 1819. He won 61% of the vote and never lost an election in 27 years.

By 1999, the Office had grown to 24 full-time officers and 10 part-time employees. On July 1, 1999, he changed his political affiliation to Republican due to his perception of the path of the national Democrat Party. Concurrently, as one of Kentucky's fastest growing communities, both Sheriff Helmig and Police Chief James Whalen were incurring shortages. They discussed consolidating some functions and perhaps their entire departments. In July 2000, they merged their detectives into the Boone County Criminal Investigations unit. By then, they already had a joint Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team. On July 1, 2001, the Police Department merged into the Sheriff's office. "It went from an agency where the sheriff's office was mostly for court security and paper service," said Major Ryan Walters. "He took it to a 24-hour, full-service police law enforcement for the county," increasing his Office by another 62 personnel.

After the 9/11 attacks, security for the United States President, Vice President, their families, and five Cabinet secretaries were upgraded substantially. Air Force One always landed at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. While Air Force Two landed at Lunken Airport, many of the rest of the dignitaries flew commercially into the Boone County airport. Sheriff Helmig's Office was always extraordinarily cooperative in working with federal agencies, the Cincinnati Police Division, and dozens of other law enforcement agencies to assure the safe ingress and egress of dignitaries and/or logistical personnel and equipment.

June 6, 2005, collaborating with the Boone County Geographic Information System, Helmig produced for the public a map of 61

known sex offenders in his county, the first county in Kentucky to do so. By then he also had the first Mounted Patrol in the state.

During December 2015, in light of recent active shooter incidents, he reminded all concealed carry trained citizens of their responsibilities to carry and provide for the safety of their community.

In July 2016, he was welcomed onto the board of directors of the Northern Kentucky Drug Strike Force, again collaborating with command personnel from Campbell County, Kenton County, and the City of Covington.

Sheriff Helmig was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2022. At first, the symptoms did not interfere with his position. But by the end of 2024, it was clear that they would and he provided the public with the following statement: "I have never stopped fighting and worked tirelessly to find solutions, but I now realize that my decline is irreversible, debilitating, and is preventing me from effectively performing my duties as Sheriff. I have too much respect for my staff, the citizens of Boone County, and the Office of Sheriff to allow my decline to hinder our continued success."

Sheriff Helmig retired in April 2025 after 43 years of service, 27 as Sheriff, and after bringing the Office to one of the most respected law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

During his career, he coached pee-wee and high school football, swimming, and bodybuilding, and umpired youth baseball.

He was also a member of the Kentucky Sheriff's Association, National Sheriff's Association, Boone County Fire Chief's Association, Fraternal Order of Police Lodge No. 33, and Boone

County Public Safety Communications Center.

Sheriff Helmig died peacefully at his home, surrounded by family, on January 27, 2026, at the age of 66.

Sheriff Helmig is survived by his wife of 34 years, Bonnie (Reed) Helmig; children, Traci (Aaron) Millson, Brandon (Elizabeth) Helmig, Amy Kallmeyer, Paige (Michael) Meade, and Lexi Helmig; grandchildren, Brendon Millson, Nathan Millson, Isabelle Burger, Addyson Welch, Alex Burger, Logan Kallmeyer, Palmer Meade, and Hazel Meade; great-grandchildren, Henry Millson, Evelyn Millson, and D. J. Ebarb; and siblings. Sherri Lamm, Katrina Zinni, Nina Helmig, Scott Helmig, and Monique Helmig.

A visitation will be held on February 3, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., followed by a funeral service at 5 p.m., at the First Church of Christ – Burlington Campus at 6080 Camp Ernst Road in Burlington. A private burial will be held at the family's convenience at Burlington Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the [Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation](#) or the [Davis Phinney Foundation](#).