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# The Gainesville Sun

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## FL executes Heath for 1989 murder outside Gainesville



Tom Sheridan, brother of the Michael Sheridan, speaks after the execution of Ronald Heath on Feb. 10 at Florida State Prison in Raiford. Heath was found guilty of murdering Michael Sheridan during a stop in Gainesville in 1989.

ALAN YOUNGBLOOD/GAINESVILLE SUN



Robert "Hutch" Hutchison speaks in front of the Alachua County Commission asking them to approve the temporary use permit to allow the Wildflowers Music Park to move forward. ELLIOT TRITTO/GAINESVILLE SUN

## County OKs permit for Wildflowers Music Park festival

Elliot Tritto  
Gainesville Sun  
USA TODAY NETWORK

With more than 100 people attending across three rooms, the Alachua County Commission voted unanimously on Feb. 10 to approve a temporary use permit for the contested Wildflowers Music Park festival in Melrose.

The more than six-hour meeting featured two opposing sides. One group, largely dressed in white shirts bearing a red slash over the words "Wildflowers Music Park," sat opposite supporters wearing aqua blue shirts with a floral pattern behind the word "Wildflowers."

Running from March 13-15, the Wildflowers Music Park festival is named after Gainesville native Tom Petty's iconic album, "Wildflowers."

Supporters of the 210-acre festival said it presents an opportunity to bring a rural community together through music while conserving land and generating a positive economic impact.

Critics, while supportive of live

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## 64-year-old put to death by lethal injection at FL State Prison

Jim Turner  
NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

TALLAHASSEE – Ronald Heath, 64, was put to death by lethal injection Feb. 10 at Florida State Prison for a 1989 murder outside Gainesville.

Heath was pronounced dead at 6:12 p.m. following a three-drug injection. He was the first inmate executed this year by the state after Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a modern record of 19 death warrants in 2025.

The state action follows the U.S. Supreme Court denying the latest appeals

by Heath's attorneys on Feb. 10.

Last week, the Florida Supreme Court denied Heath's motion for a stay of execution.

The Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops also last week asked DeSantis to commute Heath's sentence to life in prison without parole. The conference has unsuccessfully made similar requests before executions throughout the year.

"We appeal to you that it is possible both to achieve the purposes of punishment and to exercise mercy," wrote Michael Sheedy, the conference's execu-

tive director.

DeSantis signed the death warrant for Heath on Jan. 9 for the May 24, 1989 murder of Michael Sheridan, who was shot, stabbed and robbed in a wooded area south of Gainesville. Heath and his brother, Kenneth Heath, met Sheridan at the Purple Porpoise Lounge in Gainesville before the men drove to the wooded area to smoke marijuana.

In a 1991 order sentencing Ronald Heath to death, then-Circuit Judge Robert P. Cates wrote that the Heath

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## Man released in Guthrie disappearance probe

Person of interest seen in doorbell camera

KiMi Robinson, Michael Loria, Taijuan Moorman and Edward Segarra  
USA TODAY

More than a week after Savannah Guthrie's mother, Nancy Guthrie, went missing from her Arizona home in a possible kidnapping, law enforcement took a person in for questioning.

Pima County Sheriff's Department deputies "detained a subject during a traffic stop south of Tucson" and questioned the person "in connection to the Nancy Guthrie investigation," according to a statement obtained by USA TODAY.

The Sheriff's office confirmed in an update Feb. 11 that the "subject" they had detained in Rio Rico, Arizona was not

charged.

"One adult male detained Tuesday afternoon for questioning has been released after speaking with investigators. This detention was part of follow-up on incoming leads," the statement read. "As with any investigation, we do not release the identities of individuals who are detained and later released without charges."

The sheriff's department did not explain what prompted officers to stop the person on the road.

The development in the case came hours after the FBI released photos and videos of a possible suspect, who was captured on film by Nancy Guthrie's doorbell camera.

The person – who wore a ski mask and gloves and appeared to be "armed,"

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Investigators canvass the area after the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie in Tucson, Arizona. The search continues after footage from a doorbell camera showed a suspicious person. REBECCA NOBLE/REUTERS

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