

Sheriff

KEN J. MASCARA

4700 West Midway Road, Fort Pierce, Florida 34981



Member National Sheriffs' Association
Member Florida Sheriffs' Association

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News Release

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News Advisory: 2018-13

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Sheriff Mascara updates the media on recent death investigations

According to Sheriff Ken Mascara, on Friday, August 24 around 10:50 a.m. deputies were called to the intersection of Russo Road and Johnston Road in northwestern St. Lucie County where 23-year-old Tania Wise was found deceased on the side of the road. The Sheriff provided a video release of this incident from the scene and later that evening confirmed the identity of Wise.

“Our detectives continue to investigate this incident, but we now know that Tania Wise was last seen by her family in the evening of Thursday, August 23,” said Sheriff Ken J. Mascara. “An autopsy was conducted on Wise and did confirm that she was in the late stages of a pregnancy.”

According to the Sheriff, based on this, her killer will now face the additional charge of killing an unborn child by injury to the mother.

“We are currently working to obtain and analyze forensic and digital evidence,” Mascara said. “Due to the ongoing investigation into this incident, the official cause and manner of death will not be released at this time.”

According to the Sheriff, at approximately 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, deputies were called to the 3200 block of Ridgehaven Road to a known homeless camp. On scene, they located a dead body that was in a severe stage of decomposition.

“That person has been positively identified as 58-year-old Lynn Russell “Rusty” Conway,” Mascara said. “An autopsy was conducted and it has been determined that his death was the result of natural causes.”

According to the Sheriff, at approximately 7 a.m. on Tuesday, August 28, deputies were called to the Cypress Bay Mobile Home Park at 6435 North U.S. 1 for a deceased person.

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“Inside the home, deputies found 52-year Bonnie Hanks,” Mascara said. “Hanks was not under the care of a physician, so according to our standard procedure, detectives and crime scene responded to the home and attended the autopsy where it was determined that the manner in which Hanks died was not from natural causes.”

According to the Sheriff, detectives continued gathering evidence and witness statements from those who knew Bonnie and last saw her the evening of August 27.

“As a result of this investigation, Bonnie Hanks’ significant other, whom she lived with, Jeffrey Alexander Yankowski was interviewed and confirmed to be the last person seen with her before she died,” Mascara said. “Based on this, inconsistencies he gave during his interview with detectives and other evidence gathered in the case, a warrant for Yankowski’s arrest was approved by a state attorney and signed by a judge.”

According to the Sheriff, Yankowski was arrested on this warrant earlier today and is currently at the St. Lucie County Jail.

ABOUT THE SHERIFF:

The Florida Constitution establishes the Office of the elected County Sheriff who is responsible for preserving the peace, carrying out the orders of Florida courts and the Board of County Commissioners, and providing deputies at court sessions and meetings of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief correctional officer of the county. Sheriff Ken J. Mascara is elected by the people of St. Lucie County and is accountable to them.