



Attorney General Sunday's Cold Case Section, Erie Investigators Announce Charges in 2002 Rape, Murder of 20-Year-Old Sabrina Kahler

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — Tuesday, September 22, 2026

ERIE — Attorney General Dave Sunday and Erie County District Attorney Elizabeth Hirz, in conjunction with the 54th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, announced charges against an Indiana man who kidnapped and raped 20-year-old [Sabrina Kahler](#) in Erie County in 2002.

Attorney General Sunday's recently-formed Cold Case Section collaborated with local investigators and the grand jury, which returned a presentment this week recommending murder, rape, and kidnapping charges against David Heck.

Heck, now 50, took Sabrina swimming on June 24, 2002, before taking her to a wooded area near Lake Erie where he raped and killed her. Her body has not been located.

Heck was charged Monday and taken into custody at his Indiana home late Monday night. The case will be prosecuted by the Office of Attorney General and Erie County District Attorney Elizabeth Hirz.

"A totality of evidence that included key grand jury testimony from previously-reluctant witnesses led to a single conclusion — that David Heck raped and murdered Sabrina Kahler 24 years ago," Attorney General Sunday said. "This is a historical development that brings some answers for Sabrina's loved ones and the Erie community, but it is not a day of celebration as we have not yet brought Sabrina home. Efforts will continue to answer that one remaining question of "where is she?"

"I commend the many investigators who worked this case over the years and want them to know that their work contributed to this charging result," Attorney General Sunday added. "Those public servants, for years, made this case a part of their lives and longed for the day — today — when they could bring a measure of justice to Sabrina's family."

“Sabrina Kahler has never been forgotten. Her family never stopped remembering her, this community has never stopped seeking answers,” Erie County District Attorney Elizabeth Hirz said. “This case has represented more than an unsolved homicide. The homicide of a young woman leaves a lasting mark on the community.”

The Office of Attorney General’s Cold Case Section was formed in January 2026 and is led by Senior Deputy Attorney General Jennifer Schorn, who will prosecute the case, along with DA Hirz.

Sabrina’s case was referred to the Office of Attorney General and ultimately brought before the grand jury which heard testimony from numerous witnesses, including Douglas Heim and Terry Kellerman, acquaintances of Heck who were with him in the hours after he killed Sabrina.

Their testimony, and other evidence, provided the full [picture](#) of what happened to Sabrina on June 24, 2002:

Heck showed up unexpectedly at Sabrina’s family home at 1203 East 3rd St. and asked Sabrina if she wanted to go swimming. Sabrina was home alone. Heck was a cousin of Sabrina’s boyfriend, Christopher Lee, and they all had gone swimming together before.

Sabrina agreed and Heck drove them to a location about 25 miles away, called Eagley Park. There, Heck got involved in a confrontation with his ex-girlfriend and some of her friends, so Heck and Sabrina went to an ice cream shop, Tasty Twist. Heck, who was on probation, called police about the confrontation at Eagley Park (Heck was charged days earlier with assaulting his ex-girlfriend). Police responded to the Tasty Twist and saw Heck and Sabrina there.

Heck then drove Sabrina to the Fairview Gravel Pits, a heavily-wooded area with bodies of water. Witnesses reported seeing Sabrina in Heck’s Chevy Blazer not far from the location.

Heck raped and killed Sabrina at Fairview Gravel Pits. A fisherman reported hearing a female’s “blood-curdling scream” before a man matching Heck’s photo from a TV news broadcast walked out of the woods — alone — and towards him, making brief conversation.

Years later, Heck told a cellmate that he raped and killed a girl at Fairview Gravel Pits and that she screamed.

After killing Sabrina, Heck went to a bowling alley where he recruited Heim to help him move Sabrina’s body. Sabrina’s body was taken to Elk Creek Access, where she was buried. The location is prone to flooding and has changed a lot over 24 years. Police searches at and around that location have been ongoing.

Heim testified before the grand jury that he helped move and bury Sabrina’s body. Kellerman testified that Heck made claims of killing a girl.

In the days after Sabrina was last seen, friends and family searched for her and ultimately reported her missing.

David Heck was avoiding people who asked about Sabrina's whereabouts, and police ultimately found him hiding under blankets at a friend's home.

A court declared Sabrina deceased in 2009.

Criminal charges, and any discussion thereof, are merely allegations and all defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General
Strawberry Square
Harrisburg, PA 17120
717-787-3391