

# The Gainesville Sun

Thursday, May 25, 2006

SCENE & HEARD

SCENE 5

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# Gainesville the trunk of Folk Festival's family tree

*The Florida Folk Festival celebrates its 54th year this weekend*

Perhaps it started with Cousin Thelma. Perhaps local folkies just dig a nearby, riverside folk scene with campfires and coffee. Either way, you don't need Kevin Bacon's six degrees of separation to connect Gainesville to the Florida Folk Festival, which rolls into its 54th year this weekend at the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in White Springs.

Headlined this year by Roseanne Cash (Saturday night), the festival runs Friday through Sunday at the 888-acre state park along the Suwannee River. Gainesville storytellers, volunteers, pickers, players and ticket payers have been a substantial part of the festival's history. The late Thelma Boltin — a large chapter in Gainesville's own history book — is considered "THE" (all caps, as per the FFF Web site) matriarch of Florida's Folk Family.

She was a storyteller who went on to become the festival's director between 1953 and 1974, when she returned to Gainesville.

The festival's five decades are threaded together with much Gainesville twine, and this year's event retains much of that presence — perhaps more on stage. Local performers on this year's bill include Dale Crider, Patchwork, Gregg McMillan (with Jeff Sims, Jeff Million and Allan Lowe), The 24th Street Klezmer Band, Flying Turtles String Band and Inisheer Irish Dancers.

By my count, there are more than 10 acts from the Gainesville area on this weekend's schedule. There are likely more, and the booked stage talent doesn't include the Alachua County folks who pull out stories and instruments around late-night campfires. Suffice to say, there is a substantial Alachua County delegation at this state-run festival that attracts thousands of people each year.

"It's like a giant family



AIMEE SHEDDAN/Special to The Sun

Gainesville-based singer/songwriter Tom Shed, who has performed at the Florida Folk Festival on and off since 1973, will return to perform this year.

### Schedule highlights

■ **Roseanne Cash** — 8:30 p.m. Saturday. Capitol Records recording artist Cash is the daughter of the late country legend Johnny Cash. She has carved out a distinct Top 40 country niche for herself, earning a Grammy Award and becoming Billboard Magazine's top country singles artist for 1988.

■ **Vickie Genfan** — 7:30 p.m. Friday. Genfan has been dubbed "the Jimi Hendrix of acoustic guitar" for her unorthodox style of playing the 12-string.

■ **David Holt** — 8 p.m. Friday. The four-time Grammy Award-winning storyteller is also considered a master of the old-time banjo.

■ For full schedule, including all shows by Gainesville performers, see [www.florida.stateparks.org/folkfest/](http://www.florida.stateparks.org/folkfest/) or call (386) 397-7005.

reunion. One person described it as a great big family hug," said



Special to The Sun

Roseanne Cash will headline this year's Florida Folk Festival. Cash will perform Saturday night at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park in White Springs.

longtime Gainesville musicians who have performed at the FFF for 30 years or more, Lazony said with a laugh.

"There's music around the clock. Children's laughter. Nothing's changed. Little boys still chase little girls, and the little girls still scream. It's like waking up in a bubble of happiness," said Gainesville musician Suzanne Marie Grooms, wife of late folk musician/UF professor Don Grooms. She started perlate folk musician/UF professor she moved to Gainesville; her late husband had been a festival staple since the early 1970s, and the two, between their solo sets, often performed together at the festival.



Special to The Sun

Gainesville's Patchwork will perform at the 57th annual festival.

### IF YOU GO Florida Folk Festival

**WHAT:** 54th annual Festival is celebration of Florida with music, dance, stories, crafts and food

**WHEN:** Friday-Sunday

**WHERE:** Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, White Springs

**DIRECTIONS:** From Gainesville, take Interstate 75 north. Exit on State Road 136 (exit 439), travel east for 3 miles. Turn left on U.S. 41 at the State of Florida's Nature & Heritage Tourism Center. Walk-in entrance is on the left. For main entrance and festival parking, proceed 1 mile north on U.S. 41 and turn left at Florida Folk Festival sign.

**TICKETS:** \$20 for a single-day pass, \$40 for a weekend adult pass; \$4 for children 6-17 (good all three days). Children under 6 admitted free. (877-635-3655)

This year, Grooms plans to initiate her 6-year-old granddaughter, Scylvia Marie, into the festival fold. This is a beloved — and quite important — family tradition she hopes will be around for Scylvia's children and grandchildren.

And if Scylvia does bring her offspring to the festival, chances are she will be surrounded by Gainesville folks with guitars.

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