

Resort bringing tropics to Gurnee

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"Famous" Dave Anderson wants you to consider visiting Gurnee if thoughts of an 82-degree tropical good time enter your head.

Anderson, the nationally known barbecue entrepreneur, and his partners Monday led a tour of his latest inspiration, KeyLime Cove Water Resort in Gurnee, marking the halfway point in a 12-month construction timetable.

"We believe we're going to revolutionize the way Americans go on vacation. It's not just a water park," said Anderson, who rolled onto the construction site in a green KeyLime Cove van with horn blaring.

KeyLime Cove will feature 414 suites, a 64,500-square-foot indoor water park, conference center, restaurants and a spa. The \$135 million project is to open Feb. 29 northeast of the Tri-State Tollway and Grand Avenue.

Air temperature will be 82 degrees at all times in common areas, said William Morrissey, whose Minnesota-based hospitality company is part of KeyLime Cove. To mimic the tropics, he said, good air and clear water will be paramount.

"What we want you to have is a cruise ship experience, but on land," Morrissey said on the tour that included Gurnee Mayor Kristina Kovarik and other village officials.

Anderson said he's done considerable research, and it shows the American family vacation is fading. He said KeyLime Cove will be a chance for residents around Chicago and the Midwest to rejuvenate on a tropical resort vacation close to home.

If all goes according to plan, KeyLime Cove visitors will be the first to dine at two restaurants Anderson wants to take nationwide.

D.W. Anderson's Eatery & Ice Cream Parlor will have an old-fashioned soda fountain, homemade pies and hamburgers. Crazy Toucan Margarita Grille will look like a beachfront restaurant offering tropical umbrella drinks.

"We have designed KeyLime Cove to represent the best of the best," said Anderson.

Morrissey said KeyLime Cove's indoor water park will be for hotel guests only. The restaurants and other places will be available to general visitors.

Plans call for second-phase construction of an additional 200 hotel rooms and a 20,500-square-foot water park expansion.