

LAKE COUNTY

NEWS-SUN

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Already a venue for standup comedy, The Lighthouse at American Place will become a spot for live music when Seals & Crofts II performs Saturday in Waukegan. **AMERICAN PLACE**

Waukegan casino adding live music as construction nears

The goal is to open in August 2027, but it might actually take longer

By Steve Sadin
Lake County News-Sun

A groundbreaking expected early next year on a permanent resort and casino in Waukegan, a 14% increase in revenue over the past 12 months and the introduction of live music concerts are

contributing to the growth of the American Place Casino.

Alex Stolyar, the senior vice president and chief development officer of American Place owner Full House Resorts, said after receiving approval from the Waukegan City Council in September for the permanent facility's site plan, the company is putting the finishing touches on its final financing package.

"We hope to have everything in place to start construction in early

2026," Stolyar said. "We're looking at opening in August of 2027, but it could be a little longer."

When Full House issued its third-quarter earnings on Nov. 6, it credited American Place with a significant contribution to its success with record-setting revenue, according to a news release announcing the earnings totals.

"American Place continues to deliver outstanding growth,

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Executive assistant Patricia Langmaack, from Bartlett, has lunch during "Together Tuesday" at Flexera on Sept. 30 in Itasca. **PHOTOS BY JOHN KONSTANTARAS/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Prosecutors say Mexico murders were cause for hit

By Clifford Ward
Lake County News-Sun

The man suspected of hiring a hitman to kill a Beach Park resident blamed the victim for the killings of the man's brother and nephew on a farm in Mexico, Lake County prosecutors said in new court filings.

The revelations were among those detailed Thursday in a court hearing where a judge ordered Francisco Gutierrez-Vasquez, 43, of North Chicago, to be held in jail.

Gutierrez-Vasquez, authorities say, is suspected of hiring a soccer friend to kill Oscar Ochoa-Tello, 46, on Nov. 5. Ochoa-Tello was shot multiple times at 5:45 a.m. that day as he warmed up his car outside his Beach Park home.

Ochoa-Tello's son heard the gunshots and drove his father to the hospital. He died three days later in the intensive care unit.

Police arrested Cristian Ruvalcava-Torres of Wisconsin, who is charged with murder for carrying out the shooting, allegedly at the behest of Gutierrez, authorities said.

Gutierrez has not been charged in the murder-for-hire scheme, though authorities said in court documents that he is believed to have paid Torres \$1,200 and supplied the revolver used in the shooting.

Gutierrez, according to documents filed in Torres' case, told investigators that he came to the U.S. to escape drug cartel violence in his native Mexico.

"Gutierrez wanted the victim killed because the victim had Gutierrez's brother and nephew killed on their ranch in La Luz," according to a document filed in Torres' case. The document did not offer additional details of the deaths.

After Torres was arrested and questioned, he implicated Gutierrez, authorities said.

At Thursday's hearing, Assistant State's Attorney Savannah Halcomb told Judge Michael Nerheim that Gutierrez was a flight risk, and he has outstanding warrants stemming from older cases. In one, he was convicted of attacking a man with a machete in a dispute over a parking spot,

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Success in being hybrid

Companies have found that employees can be just as productive when working remotely; in some cases, they're also happier

By Francine Knowles
Daily Southtown

Despite headline-grabbing return-to-office mandates by some employers, hybrid and remote work are here to stay.

Many employers are even perfecting their approach to flexible work arrangements. They're making in-person time more strategic and purposeful, designating in-office days and taking steps to ensure new employees don't feel isolated.

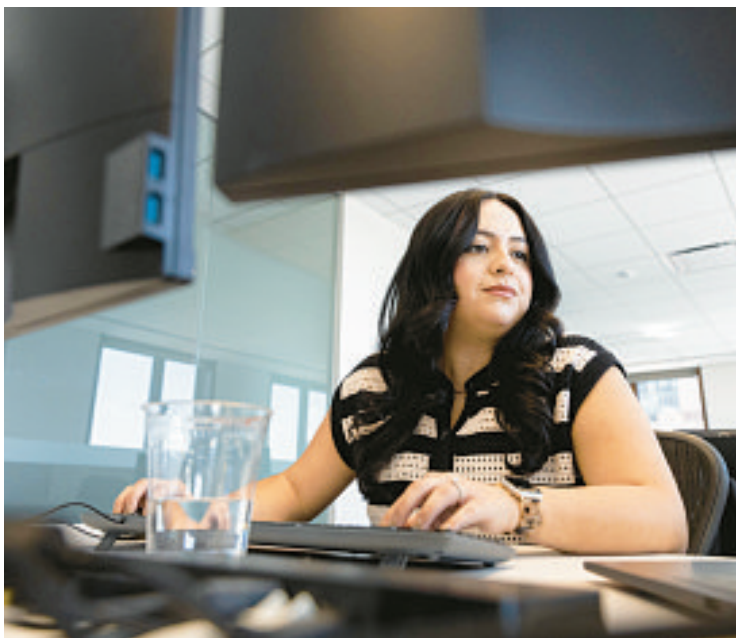
"They're undoubtedly here to stay," Johnny Taylor, president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management, said of

remote and flexible work options. "It's hard to put that genie back in the bottle."

When employers adopted flexible work arrangements during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many found that employees were just as productive when working remotely. In the years since, they've discovered that hybrid and remote work options also improve morale and make it easier to recruit and retain employees, who are increasingly prioritizing flexibility.

Among U.S. workers who have jobs that can be performed remotely, the percentage who

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Senior recruiter Desiree Loebach, from Chicago, works at Flexera in Itasca.

Birdscape created at Round Lake Beach park

By Yadira Sanchez Olson

A group of people was briefly joined by an adult bald eagle during a community planting event last week.

For a while, the bird circled the sky above Long Lake Park in Round Lake Beach as the delighted volunteers and staff from the Round Lake Area Park District worked on the ground, digging holes and planting native trees and shrubs for what is to become a birdscape.

"We have a family of bald eagles that nest near here," said Ane Olivares, the Park District's superintendent of parks.

Soon, the eagles will be joined by

other varieties of birds and wildlife, as those native species create a habitat welcoming owls, pollinators, insects and critters, such as chipmunks, squirrels and snakes.

The Park District's birdscape project has been made possible by a \$2,500 grant from the Lake County Audubon Society. It allowed for the purchase of the native plants, bushes, flowers and trees — 70 in all.

Park officials began clearing the space two weeks earlier, removing invasives, such as buckthorn and honeysuckle.

Long Lake Park, at 1030 N. Village Drive, was chosen for its characteristics. There is no play-

ground or parking lot. The birdscape space takes up almost one of the park's 69 acres and is near a lake.

"It's a passive park," Olivares said. "It's mostly used for walking, picnics and fishing."

Mark Weber of Round Lake Beach often walks his two dogs through the trail near the birdscape. He said he's looking forward to watching it grow. He was one of seven volunteers who helped plant the elderberry, witch hazel, prairie rose, white and red oak trees, and more.

"We're so excited they're doing

Turn to Birds, Page 2



Mark Weber, of Round Lake Beach, throws mulch on a pod of newly planted native plants during a community volunteer planting of a birdscape at Long Lake Park on Nov. 5. **YADIRA SANCHEZ OLSON/FOR THE LAKE COUNTY NEWS-SUN**

