



## *News Release*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HUNTINGTON, INDIANA, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INSTALLS A**  
**FULLY INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND WITH SUPPORT FROM**  
**KNORR-BREMSE GLOBAL CARE NORTH AMERICA**

*\$50,000 Combined Grant Helped to Fund the Addition of the New Play Structure  
at Horace Mann Elementary School*

**AVON, Ohio – Dec. 2, 2021** – The first thing that hits your eye when approaching Horace Mann Elementary School in Huntington, Indiana, isn't necessarily the school building, but the bright red and navy blue play structure at the front edge of its property. The 6,800-square-foot area holds a newly installed, fully inclusive playground, the only such play structure in the Huntington area. Designed in school colors, the playground is fitted with equipment and surfaces to make it a fun and inviting recreational structure for all children, including those in wheelchairs or who are affected by disabilities.

Building the new structure was a project that earned the support of Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America Inc. (KBGCNA), the North American arm of the global nonprofit organization Knorr-Bremse Global Care. The foundation is operated by Knorr-Bremse, based in Munich, Germany, and the parent company of Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC. Bendix's Huntington operation, one of its largest, includes manufacturing and assembly facilities and serves as the primary North American distribution center for Bendix, the North American leader in the development and manufacture of active safety, air management, and braking solutions for commercial vehicles.

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The Horace Mann playground is the recipient of a combined grant. KBGCNA contributed to the project with a \$40,000 grant, which was enough to cover about one-fourth of the cost of the overall project. Bendix Huntington also contributed with an additional \$10,000 corporate grant and helped with project oversight.

“Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America and Bendix were thrilled to support the inclusive playground project at Horace Mann Elementary, as an effort that contributes to bringing equity to education and improving the well-being of youth in one of the areas where we operate,” said Maria Gutierrez, president of KBGCNA and director of corporate responsibility and sustainability at Bendix. “It’s truly gratifying to be involved with an effort like this that fills a need for the local community by giving children of all abilities access to more opportunities to learn, communicate, and play together.”

### **A Playground for All Students**

Installing the inclusive playground in the Huntington community was a long-term plan for Macy Phillips, an essential skills teacher at Horace Mann Elementary School, part of the Huntington County Community School Corporation. Phillips realized the school needed such a facility about four years ago when the essential skills program first moved into the building from another location in Huntington.

Once used as a school, the property had served as an administrative office building for a number of years before it was transitioned into a school again. Phillips knew the existing playground wasn’t suitable for the students in the essential skills program, which educates around 30 children ranging in age from 4 to 12 and who have moderate or severe physical or intellectual disabilities.

The existing playground had an unstable fence and offered few pieces of equipment that could be accessed by children in wheelchairs or those with severe physical disabilities.

“There was a little ramp for them to get onto the playground, but there wasn’t anything for them to do once they got up there,” Phillips explained. “There was only one slide, and the flooring was all mulch. A big part of our program is teaching the kids to play, work, and communicate independently, so we use the playground for a lot of things, and they just weren’t able to use it.”

### **Support for a Needed Project**

Phillips began researching what it would take for the school to install an inclusive playground a few years ago, reaching out to a handful of companies for project quotes and renderings, but learned that the school's funds wouldn't necessarily be enough to build a structure large enough to accommodate the increasing number of students in the program, as well as general education at the school.

KBGCNA's involvement with the project began with Jeff Phillips, Macy's father, who is an IT GCS analyst with Bendix in Huntington. Jeff, who served as KBGCNA project champion for the grant to Horace Mann, is a member of the company's team supporting regional community outreach projects in the area. He was aware of the school's plans to pursue an inclusive playground, and after attending a company meeting and learning that KBGCNA was searching for local projects to benefit children's education, he encouraged Macy to apply for grant support.

Jeff explained that his colleagues at Bendix Huntington also saw the project as a perfect way to support education in its community. "A lot of the people here at Bendix have children at that school, so it was a really good fit for this project," he said.

Receiving that support was vital for getting the project moving, Macy said. "We got to look at what things we needed and were able to design a really cool park."

### **An Extraordinary Playground**

The new playground sits on the space where the previous older playground once was and can accommodate around 50 children at one time.

Phillips said designing the structure took some time because it was important to the school that the playground would make it easy for students from both the essential skills program and its general education program to play together on the same structure.

"We have a lot of kids who have come so far in their communication and independent skills, and they're just craving to be with the other kids at school," she said. "We wanted to find some pieces to include so that when other students came to play with us, they could all do something just as fun and interesting."

The only such playground of its kind in the vicinity, it features multiple slides and ramps throughout the structure all the way to the top, allowing children to access every part of the equipment. It also features multiple swings including adaptive swings, a free-standing spin structure, and an aero glider that Phillips says is a fan-favorite among the children and teachers

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alike. The large glider accommodates children with both benches and space for wheelchairs. The structure also offers sensory equipment and free-floating areas.

In place of mulch, the entire area is surfaced with a pour-in-place soft rubber flooring. “Every child, no matter their ability, is able to access every part of the playground,” Phillips says. “They’re able to play independently, with all the kids.”

A new fence around the playground will be added in the coming weeks. There’s also space allowing for the playground to be expanded as time goes on, which Phillips says is part of the plan. So far, the school has already ordered wheelchair accessible picnic tables and buddy benches.

“It’s important for our kids to be immersed in the general education area, and it’s important for those kids to know how to work, play, and communicate with our students,” she said.

Macy, who was recently recognized as Teacher of the Year by a local radio station, says the students and staff at Horace Mann have been thrilled about the new playground ever since construction began and are grateful to KBGCNA and Bendix for its support.

“It’s just an amazing feeling to be able to give the students something that includes them and gives them every single opportunity that any other student at Horace Mann gets. And just to be involved in this at all, it’s really exciting and a huge honor. It’s going to be life-changing for the kids here.”

### **About Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America**

Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America Inc. (KBGCNA) is an independent organization operating as the North American arm of a global nonprofit organization – Knorr-Bremse Global Care. With an aim to address local social challenges more effectively, KBGCNA investments are centered in the surrounding communities of Knorr-Bremse’s three largest North American companies: Avon, Ohio-based Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC; Westminster, Maryland-based Knorr Brake Company; and Watertown, New York-based New York Air Brake LLC. Funding activities are championed and supported by the employees of each of the three local companies. Follow us on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/company/knorr-bremse-global-care-north-america-inc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/knorr-bremse-global-care-north-america-inc).

### **About Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC**

Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems, a member of Knorr-Bremse, develops and supplies leading-edge active safety technologies, energy management solutions, and air brake charging and control systems and components under the Bendix® brand name for medium- and heavy-duty trucks, tractors, trailers, buses, and other commercial vehicles throughout North America. An industry pioneer, employing more than 4,100 people, Bendix – and its wholly owned subsidiary, R.H. Sheppard Co., Inc. – is driven to deliver the best solutions for improved vehicle safety, performance, and overall operating cost. Contact us at 1-800-AIR-BRAKE (1-800-247-2725) or visit [bendix.com](https://www.bendix.com). Stay connected

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