



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN ACUÑA, MEXICO,
EARNs ONGOING SUPPORT FROM THE BENDIX FOUNDATION AFTER SUCCESSFUL
LAUNCH FUNDED BY KNORR-BREMSE GLOBAL CARE NORTH AMERICA

Third Class of 17 Students Graduated from the Vocational Training Program, Prepared to Pursue Careers or Start a Business in Culinary Arts

AVON, Ohio – March 28, 2023 – On March 24, a class of 17 women celebrated their graduation from the Instituto de Capacitación para el Trabajo del Estado de Coahuila (ICATEC), a local vocational training center in Acuña, Mexico. Besides their graduation, the women also celebrated empowerment: They have gained the knowledge and skills allowing them to pursue a career in culinary arts techniques.

While the vocational program isn't new, a major benefactor behind the effort is. Coursework for the third and most recent cohort of students was sponsored by a \$6,230 grant from the Bendix Foundation, marking its inaugural commitment to continue the pioneering work started three years ago by Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America Inc. (KBGCNA).

Both philanthropic organizations have ties to Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC (Bendix), the North American leader in the design, development, and manufacture of active safety, air management, and braking solutions for commercial vehicles.

The Bendix Foundation is a philanthropic organization managed by Bendix's Acuña operation, focusing on community enrichment efforts in the region. Meanwhile, KBGCNA is the U.S.-based arm of a philanthropic entity operated by Knorr-Bremse, based in Munich, Germany.

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Knorr-Bremse is the global market leader for braking systems and a leading supplier of other safety-critical rail and commercial vehicle systems.

KBGCNA centers its investments on initiatives supporting youth, education, and underprivileged populations within the surrounding communities of Knorr-Bremse's three largest North American companies: Avon, Ohio-based Bendix; Westminster, Maryland-based Knorr Brake Company; and Watertown, New York-based New York Air Brake LLC.

Among these operations is Bendix's manufacturing complex in Acuña, where it has held a significant presence for more than 30 years. As such, KBGCNA supported the creation of ICATEC's vocational and empowerment program with a \$35,000 grant to the training center in 2020.

"The women's empowerment and training program that ICATEC created with support from KBGCNA has had a tremendous impact on our community, with close to 80 students graduating from the program as members of its first two cohorts," said Maria Gutierrez, president of KBGCNA and Bendix senior director, environmental, social, and governance (ESG). "The Bendix Foundation is grateful to KBGCNA for laying a strong foundation for this much-needed program. We see the value it's brought to the Acuña community, and we're proud to continue this effort."

Renewed Support for a Transformative Program

When it was created, the women's empowerment program at ICATEC was designed to address a need in the community: to give more women access to the skills, training, experience, and confidence to pursue careers, earn an income, and become self-sufficient.

Grant support from KBGCNA initially allowed the school to offer two new vocational tracks for women: one in culinary arts and another in beauty and image design techniques. Funding covered coursework for up to 40 students per cohort, along with necessary equipment for each program – for the culinary track, that included professional cooking tools such as a convection oven and professional blenders.

The Bendix Foundation also supported these initial efforts by presenting graduates with gifts of supplies that could be helpful in starting their business. For example, students in the image design course received lighted makeup mirrors and storage cases, while culinary students received baking supplies and measuring equipment. And throughout the initial effort, Bendix Acuña contributed oversight for KBGCNA's project with help from a designated employee project champion.

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The resulting program proved to be successful: The first two cohorts of between 30 to 40 students each graduated in the summers of 2021 and 2022. Around three-quarters of the graduates are now self-employed in their chosen fields.

In light of these successes, the Bendix Foundation has pledged to continue in KBGCNA's footsteps, beginning with a \$6,230 grant in late 2022 to cover culinary arts training that began in December. The foundation also supported the students with an additional \$1,000 for graduation gifts.

"We felt it was important to preserve the program that KBGCNA started," said Belem Fierro, president of the Bendix Foundation and human resources manager for the Bendix Acuña campus. "So we're keeping this vocational training program going, giving more women access to these career skills. We've committed to funding one cohort per year based on program results, adapting and evolving the program with learnings from previous cohorts. The modifications will continue to be geared around adjusting the recruitment strategy to reach the target population, meeting the women's needs more closely, and helping to strengthen entrepreneurship potential."

Increased Access to Vocational Training for Women of All Ages

The 17 women graduating from the program in March marked the event with a closing ceremony. Like previous cohorts, students will have learned a variety of skills helping them to pursue a career and start their own business in the field of culinary arts techniques.

Enrollment was once again open to women of all ages living in the Acuña area, and the program was promoted through the local women's empowerment center and the women's shelter (Opciones Dignas), as well as through ICATEC's social channels.

Students received 180 hours of instructional coursework, completed in the span of just a few months. Besides learning the fundamentals of the vocation with a practical and hands-on curriculum, they also learned how to operate and manage a business, and how to reinvest to spur business growth.

"The vocational training we've been able to offer in partnership with ICATEC benefits women of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of marital status, their household size, and so many other factors," said Jacqueline Perez, Bendix senior director of operations in Mexico and project champion. "We've seen the profound difference this program is making for women who may have previously felt their career options were limited. It's clear that the program is empowering more women in our community, and we're proud to be part of it."

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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 4,400 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 and informed through Bendix expert podcasts, blog posts, videos, and other resources at [knowledge-dock.com](https://www.knowledge-dock.com). Follow Bendix on Twitter at twitter.com/Bendix_CVS. Log on and learn from the Bendix experts at [brake-school.com](https://www.brake-school.com). And to learn more about career opportunities at Bendix, visit [bendix.com/careers](https://www.bendix.com/careers).

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).

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