



## *News Release*

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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

**BENDIX CONTRIBUTES \$25,000 FOR  
UPDATED ATHLETIC FACILITY AT AVON HIGH SCHOOL**

*Company's Support Helped the School Modernize Its Multi-sport Locker Room and  
Expand Resources for Athletes and the Community*

**AVON, Ohio – Aug. 11, 2022** – When the student athletes from its local schools needed a helping hand, Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC (Bendix) was there.

The company joined with other members of the Avon community to back the development of a new athletic facility for the Avon Local School District, for use by the fast-growing Avon High School sports program and related community endeavors. Bendix awarded a \$25,000 grant spread over a two-year period to the Avon Athletic Boosters' Project SOAR in support of the renovation and construction of a modernized facility just outside the high school stadium.

The Project SOAR team renovated the school's existing locker room building to create a one-story, 4,400-square-foot structure housing a locker room, restrooms, coaches' office, medical training room, and a community room. It did so with numerous grants and in-kind donations from other Avon-area entities, financial support from the school district, and volunteer efforts from the community. Bendix's award granted the company naming rights for the coaches' room.

Student athletes, along with their families and representatives from supporting organizations, including Bendix, recently got a sneak peek at the new facility during its grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony, held in July.

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Bendix is the North American leader in the design, development, and manufacture of active safety, air management, and braking solutions for commercial vehicles. It also is a member of Munich, Germany-based Knorr-Bremse, the global market leader for braking systems and a leading supplier of other safety-critical rail and commercial vehicle systems. Following a long tradition that is central to its mission, Bendix champions a robust community giving program that invests in local organizations and projects focused on education, healthy living, and family support.

“The new athletic facility is impressive, and we are very proud to have joined with other Avon-area businesses, families, and individuals in supporting Project SOAR and its mission to further the school’s athletic program,” said Maria Gutierrez, Bendix director of corporate responsibility and sustainability. “With Bendix’s recent move to Avon, this was a project that tied both to our new community and to the local school system, establishing a connection that we hope will flourish and grow in the coming years. Sports are always a great way to reach youth and a perfect avenue to teach students about teamwork, discipline, leadership, and many other skills that we value as a business, so this project was a strong fit.”

### **Upgrading Resources for Student Athletes**

The team members of Project SOAR, a subset of the Avon Athletic Boosters, came up with the idea for the new facility in 2019, when the group was searching for a meaningful way to support the school’s growing athletic program.

“A group of us were sitting down with Mike Elder, the head coach of the high school football team, and we asked if there was anything we could help with in regard to the facilities at the school,” Matt Canning, Project SOAR co-chair, recalled.

The group agreed on the need for an updated locker room and athletic facility near the school’s football stadium. As many as 40,000 spectators and 5,000 student athletes visit the high school stadium each year. The existing locker room, originally constructed as the wood shop and later converted, needed updates as well as increases in capacity. The school has experienced rapid growth over the last few decades, with the number of students using the locker room more than doubling.

“Previously, there wasn’t a training room separate from the locker room, the coaches’ offices were very small, and the facility wasn’t large enough for the number of people using it,” Canning said. “So, the decision was made to put together an athletic facility that would be focused on a locker room, a coaches’ room, a training room, new bathrooms, and a community area for players and coaches.”

## **Designing the New Facility**

Initially, the project team hoped to build a free-standing, two-story structure close to the high school track to house the new facilities. But with rising labor challenges and construction costs setting in just as Project SOAR began, the group adopted a more cost-effective approach. Working with the school district, the team settled on remodeling the existing locker room building with the help of school administration, families, the community, and volunteers.

“Ultimately, we decided that renovating the old facility and expanding the locker room; adding coaches’ offices, a training room, and new bathrooms; upgrading the HVAC and electrical; enhancing the AV technology; and providing a common area would be a great project,” Canning said. “And we were able to reconstruct the entire facility and create a space that is about the same size as our original plan.”

Avon High School’s new facility, completed in the summer of 2022, is located about 20 yards from the high school football field on the footprint of the previous locker room.

Canning said a core group of Project SOAR members collaborated to design the renovated structure in concert with school officials and the coaching staff. It was conceived as a highly functional space that can be partitioned as needed. While the school’s football program will occupy much of the facility during football season, athletes from other sports will have access to the separate medical training room. Partitions installed in the building allow its use by multiple teams and groups, including separate locker rooms for team sports in the spring. The facility can also be broken into smaller rooms to watch film or coach players, and it can serve as a venue for community-supported meetings.

“It’s definitely a much more usable facility, and other teams will be able to leverage it throughout the season,” Canning said.

## **Funding the Renovation**

Even with the change to its original plan, the Avon Athletic Boosters team needed to seek assistance and support from individuals and local businesses like Bendix.

Reaching out to Bendix was a priority for Project SOAR, Canning said. The group anticipated the company’s 2021 move of its North American headquarters to Avon as the project got underway and was aware of Bendix’s long-standing reputation for community support.

But attracting enough financial backing for the renovation during the COVID-19 environment wasn’t always easy. The team countered these challenges by creating a variety of sponsorship levels, soliciting both monetary and in-kind donations from entities and individuals.

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To that end, the project earned significant support from the community with numerous organizations and individuals contributing to one of the recognized donor levels, and over 50 individuals or businesses purchasing lifetime locker sponsorships. Bendix's contribution of \$25,000 qualified at the All-American Level, earning the company the right to name the new coaches' room in its honor.

The team also cut costs by recruiting volunteers to handle some aspects of construction such as demolition, concrete work, dumpster services, and constructing the lockers.

"The community, players, and parents poured a lot of sweat equity into the project," Canning said. In addition to Bendix, other local business sponsors included Cooper-Kurtz Disposal; First Federal Lakewood; Richard's Tree and Crane Service; Shurtape Technologies LLC; WestBay Floor Source; and Westland Heating, Air Conditioning and Plumbing.

"The value of the project was roughly \$500,000, and almost 70% was funded through a combination of private donors, local businesses, and in-kind construction or service donations," Canning said. "The remainder was supported by the district."

For its part, Bendix is pleased to support a project that provides a safe, positive environment for students and one that opens the door to potential future efforts with Avon Local Schools.

"We maintain a continuing relationship with the district," Gutierrez said. "We hope to support other projects, including academic programs that relate to STEM or sustainability."

After the successful grand opening, the response from students, families, and coaches has been outstanding, according to Canning.

"This is clearly one of the best high school locker rooms or athletic facilities in the area, especially when you consider the technology and the equipment installed," he said. "It met the expectations of the Project SOAR group and probably exceeded the expectations of everyone else."

Furthermore, Canning added, a project of this scale wouldn't have been possible without support from organizations like Bendix.

"The best kind of projects are the ones where the whole community comes together to get something done, and I think this is a great example," he said. "We were able to pull together the community, businesses, the school district, private donors, and sweat equity and labor from players and parents. That's the combination that made this happen."

### **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

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