



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photos Included

KNORR-BREMSE GLOBAL CARE NORTH AMERICA FUNDS IMMERSIVE, STEM-BASED LEARNING INITIATIVES AT MARYLAND EDUCATIONAL NONPROFIT NORTHBAY

Investments Totaling \$185,000 Support Renovations of Research Vessel and Wet Lab,

Connect Educational Mission with Chesapeake Bay Restoration

WESTMINSTER, Md. – Aug. 11, 2026 – NorthBay sits on the scenic northern shore of the Chesapeake Bay. The Maryland nonprofit uses hands-on, STEM-focused learning experiences to awaken thousands of underserved middle school students a year to the wonders of the natural world – and encourage them to be stewards of it.

When NorthBay sought support to renovate its research boat, Miss Nancy, it found a partner in Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America (KBGCNA), a philanthropy focused on initiatives around youth, education, and underprivileged populations. KBGCNA contributed \$82,000 to fund the complete overhauling of the vessel, which relaunched last year.

Soon after, the organizations connected again on a project now in progress – transforming an underused waterfront building at NorthBay into a year-round, fully equipped wet lab. KBGCNA's \$103,000 grant is bringing the lab to life. The science facility will extend the impact of Miss Nancy by operating in concert with the floating classroom.

NorthBay links its educational mission to a related commitment: preserving the Chesapeake Bay. The nonprofit is dedicated to reversing the ongoing degradation of the bay – including worsening water quality and biodiversity loss – by inspiring and equipping students to sustain it.

KBGCNA is the U.S.-based arm of a philanthropic entity operated by Knorr-Bremse, based in Munich, Germany. Knorr-Bremse is the parent company of Knorr Brake Company (KBC), headquartered in Westminster, Maryland, and a large employer in the region.

“Education, STEM, underserved youth – the NorthBay projects check all the boxes for us,” said Maria Gutierrez, KBGCNA president. “The projects also spotlight the environmental needs of the Chesapeake Bay, which is important in the Maryland area, as well as the amount of outreach NorthBay has done to the communities they support and the children they reach. We’re proud to join forces with the NorthBay team.”

Real Science, Real Action

Founded in 2005, NorthBay focuses on a predominantly underserved student population. It was created to build environmental literacy, academic engagement, and social-emotional growth through outdoor, field-based education.

Each year, the nonprofit serves over 10,000 middle school students – mostly sixth graders – through overnight and in-school programs. The students come from the mid-Atlantic, primarily Central and Eastern Maryland, Southeastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

NorthBay is committed to providing equitable access to all schools regardless of resources. Over 80% of its students are young people of color, over 70% live below the poverty line, and 15% are English language learners.

The organization is just as committed to preparing the next generation to take care of the Chesapeake Bay. In the mid-Atlantic, studies reveal, over 75% of the region’s students lack the environmental literacy to address bay issues.

“All of the investigations our students undertake center on an authentic science issue that’s impacting the bay or this region,” said Rick Garber, NorthBay’s senior director for programs and partnerships. “Everything we do is related to giving kids an opportunity to take action. As kids take action in one area, they feel compelled to do it in the other areas of their lives. So that’s really important to us.”

NorthBay’s program has a clear impact: 83% of students affirm, “My time at NorthBay has changed the way I look at my life.” Former students come back to work as educators. Others are making their lives performing environmental science in the Chesapeake Bay region.

More Than a Boat

Key to the scientific investigations at NorthBay is Miss Nancy, its custom-built, 50-foot pontoon boat that served up to 8,000 students annually from 2007-2018. It was temporarily sidelined when, starting in 2019, sediment buildup and shoreline deterioration limited direct student access to the bay.

The renovation and re-outfitting of Miss Nancy is a core part of what was an extensive waterfront revitalization project, which NorthBay developed with the state of Maryland and the Department of Natural Resources. In 2021, when the project began, NorthBay placed the boat in dry storage and decided to use the downtime for needed renovations after many years of daily service. The overhauled vessel debuted in May 2025, and a year later, the waterfront renewal was completed, reopening the bay to unlimited use.

“Going beyond the water’s edge, being on the water with the kids doing research and getting them excited about the bay is fundamental to our program,” Garber said.

KBGCNA's grant funded new engines, lifeboats and safety equipment, seating, paint, supplies, general repairs, curriculum development, and scientific equipment ranging from sonar and trawl to tongs for capturing samples. Also new: a projection microscope with monitor and a solar system for powering onboard electronics.

Run by a teaching captain, Miss Nancy now anchors a reimagined STEM program focused on water quality, habitats, fisheries, and human impact. Typical student excursions involve capturing microplastics to study their impact and examining bivalves and the encroachment of invasive species.

Being on the boat is Rick Garber's favorite way to teach.

"Most of the kids who come to NorthBay have never touched a natural body of water, and they've certainly never been on a boat," he said. "I allow them to experience it before I launch into all the fun science. Maybe use binoculars and find eagles. Just allow them to be. There's something powerful to that. The engagement that you're able to garner with kids on that platform is incredible."

Shore to Ship to Lab

The wet lab renovation and build-out now underway will grow Miss Nancy's impact by creating a modern shoreline science lab directly connected to the Chesapeake Bay. The new lab, open in all seasons, will provide sinks, durable lab surfaces, microscopes, aquaculture tanks, and live-data displays.

Upon its expected completion in the fall, the wet lab will function as a hub where students can raise keystone species – striped bass, wild celery, freshwater mussels – and then release or plant them from Miss Nancy. These activities place young people at the center of real Chesapeake Bay restoration science and create a seamless shore-to-ship-to-lab learning ecosystem.

"We'll have a fully equipped shoreline science lab designed for hands-on work with Chesapeake Bay water, sediments, and live specimens – far beyond what a standard classroom or dry lab can support," said Matt Wrabley, NorthBay director of development. "And by connecting the wet lab directly to Miss Nancy and NorthBay's waterfront renewal work, this project will place students in the middle of authentic Chesapeake Bay research and restoration while more than doubling access to this level of STEM learning."

With KBGCNA's funding, the building renovation includes windows and insulation, doors and lighting, HVAC, electrical, and all lab and data equipment. In addition, the grant underwrites curriculum development that integrates the wet lab's systems with Miss Nancy's investigations and shoreline fieldwork.

Vital Partnership

Since its launch in 2018, KBGCNA has awarded more than \$3.9 million to over 54 projects across the United States, Canada, and Mexico. KBGCNA centers its investments in the surrounding communities of Knorr-Bremse's three largest North American companies, a group that includes KBC along with Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC, based in Avon, Ohio; and New York Air Brake LLC, based in Watertown, New York.

Each KBGCNA grant is overseen by a project champion, who is an employee of KBC, Bendix, or NYAB, responsible for engaging with the grantee to ensure the project remains on

point from start to finish and seeking ways for local team member engagement, where possible.

Another KBC connection is Lindsey Franey, marketing and governmental affairs manager at KBC, who has been closely involved with KBGCNA and the projects with NorthBay.

“The sustainability of NorthBay’s program was really important to us,” Franey said. “NorthBay has been around a long time, and more than that, it has ambitious goals to expand and provide even more to the communities it serves. We’re excited for our strong partnership with NorthBay and are looking ahead to opportunities for expanding it.”

Rick Garber marvels at the partnership.

“At KBGCNA, there’s a commitment to the environment and to people – and that’s what NorthBay is all about,” he said. “Having the funding to rebuild the boat, having the waterfront restoration come together, and now having the wet lab underway and everything aligning – what an extraordinary confluence of projects to help us really provide high-quality education for our kids.”

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](#).

About Knorr Brake Company

Since 1973, Knorr Brake Company has been the innovative leader in supplying North American rail market customers, including light rail vehicles, metro, and high-speed trains. With its headquarters in Westminster, Maryland, the company operates sales and service facilities in Carmel, New York, and Union City, California. KBC’s subsidiaries – IFE North America LLC (passenger door systems) and Merak North America LLC (climate-control systems) – are co-located in Westminster. Knorr Brake Company is a member of the Munich, Germany-based Knorr-Bremse, the global market leader in braking systems and a leading supplier of other safety-critical rail and commercial vehicle systems. Contact Knorr Brake Company at knorrbrakecorp.com and follow us on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/company/knorr-brake-company](https://www.linkedin.com/company/knorr-brake-company). To learn more about career opportunities at KBC, please visit www.kbnajobs.com.

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