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## International company wants to grow in Fox Lake

Amanda Lutey

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Autoflex-Knott employee David Denning is one of seven employees working in Fox Lake. The company hope add a production line and more employees in the future.

AMANDA LUTEY, DAILY CITIZEN

**F**OX LAKE — A company based in Europe celebrates its 10th anniversary of founding a U.S.-based subsidiary this year.

Anita Monti, president of Autoflex-Knott, and operations manager Shaun Johnston spoke about the company's history in Fox Lake, the recent completion of a warehouse that doubled its building size, and the company's plans for future growth.

Hungarian-German company Autoflex-Knott manufactures axles and trailer parts for customers worldwide. The company originated in Hungary in 1982 as Autoflex, and became a member of the German-based Knott group of companies in 1994. Both family-built businesses, H. Szabó Sándor owns the Hungarian half, while Valentin Knott owns the German half.

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With sales approaching \$72 million, the company maintains 14 subsidiaries with a presence in Europe, China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and North and South America.

“We supply some of the biggest trailer manufacturers in the world with all of our products,” Johnston said.

The company does its stamping work in Slovakia, casting in Serbia, and manufactures tubing, steel, rubber torsion components and plastic parts in Hungary. It manufactures brake axles and metal mud fenders in Serbia and couplers in Slovakia, with other subsidiaries in Finland, Romania, Russia, Spain, China and Ukraine.

“We know where everything comes from,” Monti said.

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The company founded its first U.S. subsidiary on Nov. 30, 2006, in Indiana. It soon began to work with Karavan Trailers in Fox Lake and opted to relocate there in 2008. Autoflex-Knott first rented warehouse space, and eventually bought a 12,000-square-foot building on a nearly 6-acre lot in Fox Lake's business park.

Autoflex-Knott currently employs seven people in Fox Lake. Monti said the company has about 1,000 employees worldwide. While the company's main manufacturing is in Hungary, the Fox Lake location handles small assembly production.

"We have our own design team in Hungary," Monti said. "Research and development as well."

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Monti said she lived in Fox Lake for a few years, and now visits every other month.

"In the future, we will set up a production line here," Monti said.

"Hopefully, we can become more independent here," Johnston said.

Fox Lake city administrator Gary Rogers said you don't think of a company with Autoflex-Knott's depth having a presence in a community like Fox Lake.

"We owe a lot of that to Karavan Trailers," Rogers said. "They compliment each other."

Autoflex-Knott applied for funds through Fox Lake's economic development incentive program. Rogers said the application was approved unanimously by the city's Redevelopment Authority. The company used the funds to help expand its warehouse, working with Horizon Construction.

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The new warehouse space added 13,000 square feet to Autoflex-Knott.

"We doubled the size of the facility," Johnston said.

Johnston said the city was helpful.

Mayor Tom Bednarek said Autoflex-Knott recently contributed to the city's summer recreation program, along with other businesses.

"They're a tremendous asset to the community," Bednarek said.

Anniversary celebrations in September will include a visit from upper executives from around the world.

To learn more, visit **[www.autoflex-knott.com](http://www.autoflex-knott.com)**.

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