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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.P. State Fair breaks attendance records, supports 4-H kids

ESCANABA - Attendance at the Upper Peninsula State Fair this year continued to break previous records despite heavy rains that caused the cancellation of a grandstand event.

Estimated attendance was 83,600, an increase of 2 percent over last year's record attendance. Gate receipts totaled \$371,034. Fair ride ticket sales grew 1/2 percent over last year.

"We're certainly headed in the right direction. We're continuing the trends that we've had for the last six years since the fair has been governed by the 16-member Authority and we're very thankful for that," said Vickie Micheau, executive director of the Delta Commerce Center, the fair's management agency.

Vendor involvement also increased 3.5 percent from 2014. Micheau said interest from new vendors shows that they are benefiting from the activity at the fair. An effort was made this year to expand vendor locations to allow room for more activity.

Rain did affect attendance at the fair Wednesday and Thursday morning. Heavy rains Sunday kept attendance way down and caused the cancellation of the Armageddon on Wheels program at the grandstands.

Thursday did prove to be a big day at the fair, Micheau said, with the Governor's luncheon, veteran recognition, and Senior and Native American Day activities. Tyler Farr was also a big draw.

"That was our biggest grandstand show," said Micheau. "We had Tyler Farr who really brought in a lot of people. I would say that contributed to a very busy Thursday."

Micheau said attendance was also good for the Fab Four concert Friday night at the grandstands. Fair week attendance was the highest on Saturday thanks to almost perfect weather conditions and UPIR racing on Saturday night.

The Junior Market Livestock Sale Saturday brought in \$562,000 for 4-H kids participating at the fair, a \$100,000 increase over last year. "It really is a great reward for these young exhibitors who have projects that they manage all year. The final generosity of the bidders on that one Saturday afternoon was amazing," said Chuck Bergdahl, chairman of the U.P. State Fair Authority.

It did include the more than \$20,000 raised for Christian Johnson of Daggett, who has been battling severe ongoing health problems. More than 83 bidders joined in to buy his hog during the sale.

Adding additional exhibitor awards of \$49,000 to the livestock sale, exhibitors directly received over \$610,000 at this year's state fair.

Bergdahl said he was pleased with the popularity of the green spaces that were provided this year for family dining. He said the Authority will explore ways to improve handicapped accessibility for next year's fair.

Next year's Michigan State Fair in the Upper Peninsula is scheduled for August 15-21.