

Operation Action U.P. Not for Profit award winner for Michigan's Only State Fair in the Upper Peninsula managing board, the U.P. State Fair Authority

The Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance is proud to announce the U.P. State Fair Authority is the Non Profit of the Year for 2015. The award will be presented at the Operation Action UP Annual Meeting on January 27th at Northern Michigan University's University Center.

In 1928 Michigan's Governor proclaimed there would be two state fairs: one in Detroit for Lower Michigan, and one in Delta County for Upper Michigan to celebrate the unique cultures and heritage of each area. It was decided to hold the U.P. State Fair in the late summer/early fall to celebrate the rich agricultural traditions of our area. U.P. Farmers brought in recently harvested crops and prizes were handed out for the best in several categories.

In 2010 when state funding for both fairs ended due to budget cuts, a team of local leaders determined the fair was too important to the community, both as a celebration of our culture and for the economic impact. The U.P. State Fair Authority was formed and made up of representatives from all 15 counties of the U.P. and members of the Hannahville Indian Community. The state transferred the property the group but did not provide any funding. The Authority was able to start out thanks to a 2% grant from the Hannahville Indian Community.

The Upper Peninsula State Fair Authority is the governing body of the U.P. State Fair. It is responsible for coordinating and providing a variety of services related to the U.P. State fair and the fairgrounds for the citizens of the U.P. and in Michigan. The mission of the U.P. State Fair Authority targets 3 main objectives in its responsibilities:

1. Agricultural Promotion – Promoting agriculture is a primary focus to connect consumers with producers of agricultural products. The fair supports programs, facilities, and competitions to enhance this connection during the fair and at all other times.
2. Economic Development – The fairgrounds provides vendors, exhibitors and entertainers a modern and extensive facility to display, sell and promote their products to fair and to special event visitors. The Authority and its management agency, the Delta County Area Chamber of Commerce, seek to create an environment to enhance economic activity in the U.P. and in Michigan.
3. Education and Heritage – Since 1928, the U.P. State Fair has provided a place for folks from across the nation to experience and celebrate the unique culture and heritage of the U.P. The U.P. State Fair Authority is aware of this heritage and wishes to ensure that future generations can enjoy it as well. The U.P. State Fair seeks to develop programs that will preserve the heritage and educate the public about opportunities in agriculture and natural resources in the U.P. and Michigan.

The original concept of the fair to use the facility only during fair week has changed dramatically. Non-fair events utilize the grounds and buildings during the entire year. Events have included national fishing tournaments, national camping rallies, national trappers convention, horse shows, sport shows, auto shows, livestock sales and clinics, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Logging Expo, antique machinery displays, flea markets, concerts, square dancing, evangelistic crusades, pet shows, banquets, indoor ice arenas, and indoor tennis.

In the last 6 years we've experienced some of the best fairs and events that have ever been featured on the Michigan State Fairgrounds in the Upper Peninsula. Under governance of the U.P. State Fair Authority, tremendous growth has been realized in our annual fair, non-fair events, winter storage and

building rentals, significant building and grounds improvements, and financial position. The credit goes Authority members, vendors, community leaders, volunteers, sponsors and partners across Michigan, and the hard working staff.

The financial growth and development the group has achieved is significant. According to the audited financials, Gate Receipts before discounts grew from \$390,000 in 2010 to \$440,000 in 2014. The group has invested in the buildings and grounds and it has paid off – Rental Income grew from \$62,00 in 2010 to \$118,000 in 2014. They've reinvested over \$643,000 in capital purchases and land improvements and built the Miracle of Life Pavilion in 2012. Their sound management principles have resulted in a strong balance sheet with over \$500,000 in cash and \$1,300,000 in assets. They continue to invest in improving the fairgrounds and recently were awarded a DNR Recreation Passport Grant for improvements to Equestrian Center Improvement and Speed Barn Renovations. Because of the strong partnership the Authority has with Hannahville Indian Community and their contribution of 2% funds, once completed the buildings and arenas will be known as the Hannahville Indian Community Equestrian Center.

2015 concluded the 6th record setting year of U.P. State Fair operations. Attendance continued to break previous records despite heavy rains that caused the cancellation of a grandstand event with over 83,600 visitors. Vendor involvement was up 3.5%. 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. This included the more than \$20,000 raised for Christian Johnson of Daggett, who has been battling severe ongoing health problems. Adding additional exhibitor awards of \$49,000 to the livestock sale, exhibitors directly received more than \$610,000.

Since 1928, the Upper Peninsula State Fair has provided a place for folks from across the nation to experience and celebrate the unique culture and heritage of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The "Fair" remains as unique and wonderful as the people and places found across this marvelous peninsula. Nowhere is the slogan "the Purest of Pure Michigan" more suitable than in Escanaba during the annual Upper Peninsula State Fair August 15-21, 2016.



Joel Schultz, CEO, CUPPAD, presents award to Dave Anthony and Chuck Bergdahl, representatives of the U.P. State Fair Authority