



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.P. State Fair numbers up dramatically over 2016, best year ever

ESCANABA — The Upper Peninsula State Fair saw a dramatic increase in attendance this year, according to fair organizers. Ticket sales were up 17 percent over 2016.

Delta Chamber Executive Director Vickie Micheau said today that this year's estimated attendance at the Michigan 906 State Fair was a record 87,750. The previous record year was 2015 at 83,600. Fair attendance in 2016 was slightly more than 75,000.

The big difference was weather. Heavy rains and flooding suppressed attendance on Saturday in 2016. This year, sunshine attracted a record crowd Saturday. Micheau said attendance was up each day except Thursday and Sunday.

"We didn't have great weather Monday night. It did rain a little. We hit a record for all-time gate attendance on Monday and, of course, Saturday was a phenomenal day with record attendance," Micheau said.

The fair was held August 14-20 in Escanaba.

Attendance numbers were based on tickets purchased or distributed in advance of fair week to vendors, volunteers, media, sponsors and employees as well as tickets purchased at the gate during the fair. Gate receipts Saturday were \$106,321 compared to \$24,589 in 2016. Friday saw a 42 percent increase in ticket sales at \$67,740 compared to \$47,643 in 2016.

Rain affected attendance on Thursday. Attendance dropped 56.4 percent on Thursday compared to 2016. Yet, 479 veterans were able to attend the fair that day as part of Honored Citizens Day.

Sunday's attendance was down 31 percent. Micheau said that was probably because people were able to attend the fair on Saturday this year because of the better weather.

Gate receipts totaled \$376,475, an increase of more than \$55,000.

Skerbeck Entertainment Group reached a company record high with a 12.5 percent increase in sales.

"The Skerbeck Entertainment Group has been a fabulous partner. They do a wonderful job with the carnival on the midway and they hit an all-time company record for any fair, any festival with this fair," said Micheau.

The best attended grandstand shows, Micheau said, were LoCash on Thursday and Sawyer Brown on Saturday. New midway entertainment also attracted fair goers but Micheau said other regular activities were also popular this year.

"The part that I think people are taking notice of is once they come through the gate, is that there are so many other things to do. The DNR Pocket Park was tremendously popular this year as was the Steam & Gas Engine Village," she said.

The Junior Market Livestock Auction sale was down this year in part because there were fewer entries and a special charitable giving auction was not held. Total sales were \$446,640, down from \$510,000 in 2016.

The auction included 113 hogs, 26 lambs, 8 market goats and 66 steers.

Representatives from all 15 counties in the Upper Peninsula and the Hannahville Indian Community operate the fair and the fairgrounds through the U.P. State Fair Authority. The Delta Chamber of Commerce is the managing organization.

Micheau said they are already making plans for 2018. Fair staff added action items for possible improvements on a white board at the fair office to consider for next year.

The 2018 U.P. State Fair is scheduled for August 13-19.

The next big event at the U.P. State Fairgrounds is the 72nd annual Great Lakes Logging and Heavy Equipment Expo Sept. 7-9.