In response
To the editor:
Don Wolf's letter in last week's paper, regarding the rodeo and the Fair Board, was full of the assumptions and misinformation he seemed to be discouraging. I would like to set the record straight.
Wolf states that the Upper Peninsula Championship Rodeo Board is delinquent in its fairground rental payments to the county of Iron, or what he called "summer utility usage." They are not. The rodeo has, in the past, paid the Fair Board $1,500 for use of the grounds for one week. 2010 discussions between the Fair Board and the Rodeo Committee led to a $500 reduction in the rental price, with the Rodeo Committee to take on the physical labor regularly done by the Fair Board members or whoever they chose to hire. 2011 rent of $1,500 has been paid.

The Rodeo Committee not only pays the $1,500 rental fee, but also pays $2,200 annually, which is supposed to be to pay off the rodeo's share of the grandstand project. This fee started out as a $1 per ticket surcharge and was supposed to be billed to all profit-making events utilizing the grandstands. The lump sum fee was later approved.
The current Rodeo Board did not understand the details as to why the rodeo was being billed for this, since it was thought that the grandstands had long since been paid off. After several attempts through different sources to find proof of the total cost of the project, and how much money was brought in through the DNR grant and fundraisers, the board, in 2009, withheld its $2,200 payment until their questions were answered. Basically, the same thing the county is doing to the Fair Board now.
A major question was why a new contract was signed in 2001, making U.P. Rodeo responsible for paying off 61 percent of the loan, while the Fair Board paid only 25 percent and the county 14 percent, on property owned by the county, run by the Fair Board and only used for one week a year by the rodeo, which is considered a tenant. Also part of the 2001 contract was that if the county receives any income from other sources for use of the grandstands, that income is to be applied to the indebtedness of the grandstands using the same percentages. Using information from the Grandstand Facility Payment Plan document received from the county, this is not occurring.
At the 2010 Fair board/Rodeo Committee meeting, then County Commissioner and Fair Board Treasurer George Brunswick told the Rodeo Committee that he was attempting to get the grandstand fees abolished for both the rodeo and the Fair Board, despite the fact that both fees went directly back into the Fair Board's budget.
Brunswick's request was brought up at the Feb. 23 regular meeting of the County Board and can be found in those minutes. Brunswick made a motion, which was supported by Commissioner Fran Wills, to have Prosecuting Attorney Melissa Powell Weston look into the legality of abolishing the fees. Though Brunswick told the Rodeo Committee that the fee was dropped for 2010, apparently the County Board had not taken any action on the request. The Rodeo Committee was unaware of this until very recently and surprised at the allegations of delinquency.
I find Wolf's statement regarding the Fair Boards "continued support" of the rodeo quite

amusing. Wolf must define billing the Rodeo Committee a total of $3,700 a year as “supporting” it. I do not. I call it renting out their facility, which includes a utility charge and repaying the county as part of the original construction of the grandstand. For the record, U.P. Rodeo Inc. is the owner of the arena panels and chutes gates in the lower arena.

As far as Wolf’s questioning whether or not the rodeo has been able to bring money into Iron County, all one has to do is look at the economic impact study done in 1986, which showed $1.5 million coming into Iron County during rodeo weekend. Although several years have passed and the times have changed, economists say current economic impact can be found by adding 2 to 3 percent per year to that number. I’ll let you do the math Mr. Wolf; you seem to have a lot of time on your hands.

What I don’t understand is how Wolf could meet with the county administrator and a county commissioner and still not get his facts straight. Wolf can say whatever he likes about the Rodeo Committee, but that doesn’t make it true. If he attended any rodeo or County Board meetings, he might have a little more knowledge on the issue. Instead he is forming and then spreading his opinions based on misinformation and assumptions.

And you know what they say about people who make assumptions.

-s- Wendy Otto-Shimun
Iron River