

Wealth Strategies Group, LLC

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2024 and hopes for a healthy and prosperous one! The market closed out 2023 with a slight increase for the week with the S&P closing up 0.49% giving it a positive 26.29% for the year¹. Economic numbers coming in the last week of the year showed positive results in the fight against inflation. One of the Fed's favorite gauges (the Personal Consumption Index) fell 0.1% in November², the first decline since April 2020³. While not declaring victory yet on the inflation front, expectations are for lower rates this

year with many analysts betting on March as the starting point⁴. CME Group's FedWatch Tool illustrates this with a current better than 65% odds of a 0.25% reduction at the March 20th meeting⁵.

Hopefully, you had a pleasant and safe New Year celebration. I've noted in the past few updates that I no longer make resolutions for the year. Instead, I choose a word or phrase to concentrate on for the year. This year my word is "**Committed**". In looking at any activity or goal I engage in this year, I hope to be "*committed*" to its fulfillment and be all-in when working on the individual tasks to see it completed. This is applied to both those goals and activities here at Wealth Strategies Group as well as personal goals at home. I would love to hear from you about what you hope to accomplish and if you've chosen a word or phrase to apply to your efforts.

----Chuck

This Week's Inspiration/Activity:

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."

Novelist, George Eliot

Your activity for this week is to spend some time considering what you would like to change about yourself or your finances this year and begin laying out plans to achieve it.

This Week in History:

January 6, 1994 -- Olympic hopeful Nancy Kerrigan is attacked at a Detroit ice rink following a practice session two days before the Olympic trials. A man hit Kerrigan with a club on the back of her knee, causing the figure skater to cry out in pain and bewilderment⁶.

¹ see update below

² <https://www.foxbusiness.com/economy/feds-favorite-inflation-gauge-cooled-more-expected-november>

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/22/economy/pce-inflation-consumer-spending-november/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.foxbusiness.com/economy/will-federal-reserve-cut-interest-rates-2024>

⁵ <https://www.cmegroup.com/markets/interest-rates/cme-fedwatch-tool.html?redirect=/trading/interest-rates/countdown-to-fomc.html>

⁶ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/skater-nancy-kerrigan-attacked>

MARKET INSIGHTS



January 02, 2024

Stocks posted a slight gain last week amid a shortage of news and light holiday trading.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.76%, while the Standard & Poor's 500 added 0.49%. The Nasdaq Composite index advanced 0.32% for the week. The MSCI EAFE index, which tracks developed overseas stock markets, increased 1.13%.^{1,2,3}

Source: YCharts.com, December 30, 2023. Weekly performance is measured from the close of trading on Friday, December 22, to Friday, December 29, close. Treasury note yield is expressed in basis points.

Stocks Gain to End Year

The stock market gains in the final trading days of 2023 capped an exceptional year of performance. The last-week rally also mirrored the historical tendency of stocks to rise at this time of year, a propensity known as the "Santa Claus rally." The Santa Claus rally covers the final five trading days of the calendar year and the first two days of trading in January.

The average return of the S&P 500 during this Santa Claus rally is 1.3% during the past 73 years. Remember that past performance does not guarantee future results, and individuals cannot invest directly in an index.⁴

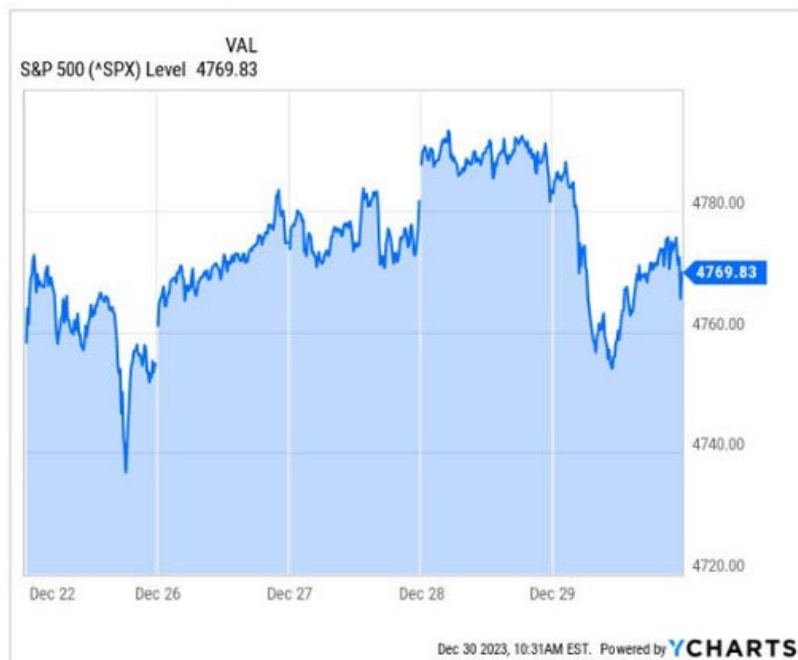
The 2023 week's gains, led by smaller-capitalization stocks and a handful of industry sectors, were partially erased on Friday as light volume and some profit-taking pressured stocks.

YCHARTS

Major Index Return Summary

| Name | ROC 5 | 1M TR | YTD TR | 1Y TR |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Dow Jones Industrial Average | 0.76% | 6.51% | 16.18% | 15.93% |
| MSCI EAFE | 1.13% | 5.42% | 18.85% | 18.15% |
| Nasdaq Composite | 0.32% | 5.36% | 44.64% | 44.48% |
| S&P 500 | 0.49% | 4.97% | 26.29% | 25.97% |

S&P 500 Daily Close



10-Year Note Review

| Indicator Name | Latest Value | 1M Ago | 1M Change |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------|-----------|
| Date | | 3M Ago | 3M Change |
| | | 1Y Ago | 1Y Change |
| 10 Year Treasury Rate | 3.88% | 4.27% | -9.13% ▼ |
| 12/29/23 | | 4.59% | -15.47% ▼ |
| | | 3.83% | 1.31% ▲ |

Jobless Claims Rise

Initial jobless claims increased by 12,000 to 218,000, which exceeded economists' forecasts. The four-week moving average, which better illustrates jobless claim trends, was little changed, coming in at 212,000; this was the lowest number since late October.⁵

Continuing jobless claims, which measures the number of individuals collecting unemployment benefits, was flat from the previous week at 1.88 million.⁶

This Week: Key Economic Data

Wednesday: Institute for Supply Management (ISM) Manufacturing Index.

Thursday: Automated Data Processing (ADP) Employment Report. Jobless Claims.

Friday: Employment Situation.

Source: Econoday, December 29, 2023

The Econoday economic calendar lists upcoming U.S. economic data releases (including key economic indicators), Federal Reserve policy meetings, and speaking engagements of Federal Reserve officials. The content is developed from sources believed to be providing accurate information. The forecasts or forward-looking statements are based on assumptions and may not materialize. The forecasts also are subject to revision.

This Week: Companies Reporting Earnings

Thursday: Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc. (WBA), Lamb Weston (LW), Conagra Brands (CAG)

Friday: Constellation Brands, Inc. (STZ)

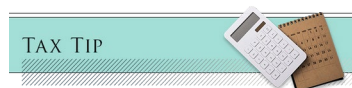
Source: Zacks, December 29, 2023

Companies mentioned are for informational purposes only. It should not be considered a solicitation for the purchase or sale of the securities. Investing involves risks, and investment decisions should be based on your own goals, time horizon, and tolerance for risk. The return and principal value of investments will fluctuate as market conditions change. When sold, investments may be worth more or less than their original cost. Companies may reschedule when they report earnings without notice.



"To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom."

– **Bertrand Russell**



Need Last Year's Tax Returns?

Help is available for taxpayers who need tax information for prior years but still need to keep copies of their returns. There are ways to get the information you need.

Keep in mind the IRS recommends that taxpayers keep copies of their returns and any documentation for at least three years after filing:

- **Ask your software provider or tax preparer.** This is often the easiest way to get a copy of your tax returns.
- **Order a tax transcript.** Taxpayers who cannot get a copy of a prior-year return may order a tax transcript from the IRS. This document partially masks personally identifiable information such as names, addresses, and Social Security numbers. All financial entries, including the filer's adjusted gross income, are apparent. These are free and available for the most current tax year after the IRS has processed the return. People can also get these records for the past three years.

- **Pay for a copy from the IRS.** As a last resort, you can purchase a copy of your tax return from the IRS. Check the IRS website for the most recent information on the process to follow when ordering a copy and the cost of the return.

**This information is not intended to substitute for specific individualized tax advice. We suggest you discuss your specific tax issues with a qualified tax professional.*

Tip adapted from IRS.gov⁷



Being SMART about fitness goals

Are you putting exercise on the back burner? Instead of saying you will “exercise more,” state a SMART exercise goal. SMART stands for:

- **Specific:** State the objective you wish to meet as precisely as possible: “I am going to commit to doing a full-body video workout several times a week.”
- **Measurable:** Identify quantifiable criteria to allow you to measure your progress: “I am going to do this workout three times a week for at least 30 minutes each time. I will track my progress in my workout journal.”
- **Attainable:** Your goal should be ambitious but not impossible: “I am committing to three times a week, not seven times a week, because it is realistic and achievable for me with my current schedule.”
- **Relevant:** Your goals must align with your current circumstances and priorities: “I will do it to stay healthy and strong during these times and to feel less stressed.”
- **Time-bound:** Allocate a specific period for completing your goal: “I will commit to this plan for a month. In 30 days, I will have had 12 workouts and will reassess my goal after that.”

Tip adapted from Sharp.com⁸



Victor is assigned to paint suite numbers on doors at an office building with 100 suites, which will be numbered from 1 to 100. How many times will he have to paint the number 8?

Last week’s riddle: Liz went into a convenience store at 1:58 AM on Sunday to get a coffee. She drove six miles away and then returned to the store to get a lotto ticket, also at 1:58 AM. The store’s clock was working perfectly, so how could it be 1:58 AM again when she returned? Answer: Liz made her trips to the convenience store during the morning when people set clocks back an hour for the end of Daylight Saving Time (at 2:00 AM).



Scenic view of train crossing a viaduct in Switzerland

Footnotes and Sources

1. The Wall Street Journal, December 29, 2023
2. The Wall Street Journal, December 29, 2023
3. The Wall Street Journal, December 29, 2023
4. Nasdaq.com, December 19, 2023.
5. Bloomberg, December 28, 2023.
6. Bloomberg, December 28, 2023.
7. IRS.gov, November 14, 2023.
8. Sharp.com, December 12, 2023.

Investing involves risks, and investment decisions should be based on your own goals, time horizon, and tolerance for risk. The return and principal value of investments will fluctuate as market conditions change. When sold, investments may be worth more or less than their original cost.

The forecasts or forward-looking statements are based on assumptions, may not materialize, and are subject to revision without notice.

The market indexes discussed are unmanaged, and generally, considered representative of their respective markets. Index performance is not indicative of the past performance of a particular investment. Indexes do not incur management fees, costs, and expenses. Individuals cannot directly invest in unmanaged indexes. Past performance does not guarantee future results.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average is an unmanaged index that is generally considered representative of large-capitalization companies on the U.S. stock market. Nasdaq Composite is an index of the common stocks and similar securities listed on the NASDAQ stock market and is considered a broad indicator of the performance of technology and growth companies. The MSCI EAFE Index was created by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) and serves as a benchmark of the performance of major international equity markets, as represented by 21 major MSCI indexes from Europe, Australia, and Southeast Asia. The S&P 500 Composite Index is an unmanaged group of securities that are considered to be representative of the stock market in general.

U.S. Treasury Notes are guaranteed by the federal government as to the timely payment of principal and interest. However, if you sell a Treasury Note prior to maturity, it may be worth more or less than the original price paid. Fixed income investments are subject to various risks including changes in interest rates, credit quality, inflation risk, market valuations, prepayments, corporate events, tax ramifications and other factors.

International investments carry additional risks, which include differences in financial reporting standards, currency exchange rates, political risks unique to a specific country, foreign taxes and regulations, and the potential for illiquid markets. These factors may result in greater share price volatility.

Please consult your financial professional for additional information.

This content is developed from sources believed to provide accurate information. The information in this material is not intended as tax or legal advice. Please consult legal or tax professionals for specific information regarding your individual situation. This material was developed and produced by FMG Suite to provide information on a topic that may be of interest. FMG is not affiliated with the named representative, financial professional, Registered Investment Advisor, Broker-Dealer, nor state- or SEC-registered investment advisory firm. The opinions expressed and material provided are for general information, and they should not be considered a solicitation for the purchase or sale of any security.

Copyright 2024 FMG Suite.

Charles D. Vercellone,
Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC®)
Accredited Investment Fiduciary (AIF®)
Wealth Strategies Group, LLC
200 E Big Beaver, Troy MI 48083
248-680-4622
chuck@wsgllc.net
www.wsgllc.net/welcome

Fee Based Advisory Services through Sigma Planning Corporation, A Registered Investment Advisor
Securities Products and Services through Sigma Financial Corporation, Member FINRA/SIPC
Wealth Strategies Group, LLC is not affiliated with Sigma Planning Corp or Sigma Financial Corp