



The Dow closes in on 13,000

By CHRISTINA REXRODE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The Dow edged teasingly close to the 13,000 marker on Friday, a milestone it hasn't reached since before the financial crisis brought the U.S. economy to its knees.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 45.79 points, or 0.4 percent, to close at 12,949.87, its highest close for the year so far. That followed a 123-point surge the day before, when it also set a closing record for 2012.

The rest of the market struggled for direction on what turned out to be a quiet news day as traders prepared for the long Presidents' Day weekend. The Standard & Poor's 500 rose 3.19 points, or 0.2 percent, to 1,361.23, also setting a record close for 2012. The Nasdaq composite, after surging Thursday, fell 8.07 points, or 0.3 percent, to 2,951.78. Greek debt talks idled and a key economic indicator, U.S. consumer prices, came in at about what analysts were expecting.

The Dow hasn't closed above 13,000 since May 19, 2008, a time when the Bush administration was still in charge, Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch still existed, and unemployment was just 5.4 percent, compared to the current 8.3 percent.

Though 13,000 in some ways would be just a number on a board, with no direct bearing on the fundamentals of the economy, its psychological effect could still be important. People and businesses tend to spend based on how they feel about the economy, and big round numbers can affect feelings just as much as money in the wallet.

"It's not an insignificant psychological barrier," said Marc Scudillo, managing officer at EisnerAmper in New Jersey. "People still need to have that vote of confidence that investing in U.S. companies is still the right direction to go long-term."

On the other hand, popping up to 13,000 could also have a contradictory effect on the Dow. It would almost certainly trigger requirements in some investment firms to sell off some of their stocks, which could briefly push the index back down.

By some accounts, the market is stalling out under the weight of conflicting headlines about the U.S. economy and about Greece, which is trying to secure rescue loans from other European countries so it won't default on debt due next month.

Though recent news about jobless claims and housing starts have been incrementally better, they're still far below where they need to be for a full recovery. Greece and its lenders no sooner hammered out one portion of a debt deal before they find something else to disagree on. In the 33 trading days of 2012 to date, the Dow has risen on 19 and fallen on 14.

Consumer prices rose modestly in January on higher costs for food, gas, rent and clothing.

But economists downplayed the increase, saying inflation will likely ease in the coming months as prices for raw materials level off.

The consumer price index increased 0.2 percent last month, after a flat reading in December, the Labor Department said Friday.

Excluding volatile food and energy, so-called "core" prices ticked up 0.2 percent. A big reason for the increase was that clothing prices jumped 0.9 percent. Medical care, rent and tobacco prices also increased.

Car prices were unchanged, and airfares fell.

Core inflation over the past 12 months moved up to 2.3 percent — its highest point in more than three years. A steady rise in core prices could limit the Federal Reserve's ability to take steps to boost the economy.

Still, economists said inflation is likely leveling off. For example, clothing prices are higher because of a spike last year in the cost of cotton. When the impact of the cotton hike fades, clothing costs should ease.

Separately, the Conference Board said its index of leading economic indicators rose 0.4 percent last month to its highest point since July 2008. The steady rise has coincided with other positive data that suggest the recovery is picking up.

Last year's Shop Local Bucks County Locavore networking event at Superior Woodcraft's offices and showroom on North Hamilton Street resulted in a sustainable business partnership between Triumph Brewery in New Hope, Blue Moon Acres in Buckingham and Bucks County Freedom Fuel/Wash Tyme in Perkasie. Attending were (from left) Patrick Kennedy, vice president of Superior Woodcraft; Ashley Lyons, sales manager, Blue Moon Acres; Dan Weintraub, sales manager, Triumph Brewery; and Andy Rumbold, owner of Bucks County Freedom Fuel and Wash Tyme.

Promoting local partnerships

By CRISSA SHOEMAKER DEBREE
STAFF WRITER

The salad you order at the Triumph Brewery may be made with micro-greens grown at Blue Moon Acres in Buckingham.

When the day is done, the New Hope restaurant will bottle up its used cooking oil for Bucks County Freedom Fuel, a Perkasie company that uses it to make biofuel for farm tractors — including the tractors at Blue Moon.

The oils also used in soap made by Freedom Fuel's sister company, Wash Tyme, that Triumph uses in its kitchen.

The unique partnership between the companies demonstrates how local businesses can work together to create a local, sustainable supply chain. It's also the example of what can happen at a popular networking event that draws hundreds of participants every year to Doylestown to learn about, and enjoy, products and services from local businesses.

"That's what we were hoping for," said Patrick Kennedy. A vice president at Doylestown's Superior Woodcraft, he began the Shop Local Bucks County Locavore networking event three years ago as a business card exchange for the Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce. Locavore is a term borrowed from the local food movement; it describes someone who's interested in community businesses and food from local sources.

This year's Locavore event will be held Thursday.

"The whole idea is to educate the public, educate the consumer, and also to help local businesses the best that we can," he said. "Part of that is networking and forming relationships and trying together to help each other."

Referring to the first event, Kennedy said, "It was a really bad winter, lots of snow, and everybody knows the business environment was not so good. So we decided, let's plan a little escape for people. Let's plan a business card exchange where people can come here, forget about everything for a while and have a good time."

Kennedy expected only about 50 people to show up at the first event, held at Superior Woodcraft's offices and showroom on North Hamilton Street. More than 300 attended.

Last year, Superior Woodcraft, which makes custom cabinetry, partnered with the Doylestown Business and Community Alliance. More than 400 people attended that event. The alliance is also a partner in this year's event, which is expected to draw more than 500 people. In addition to products from local businesses, Bucks County officials also will be on hand to talk about economic development.

"We saw the potential," Kennedy said. "Somebody needs to do something, so why not us? We really believe in a strong community, from a civic standpoint and a business sense. It's something that we saw that we could do. It's not a big deal, playing a little part in helping local companies."

Andy Rumbold, president of Bucks County Freedom Fuel and co-owner of Wash Tyme with his wife, Dorinda, will again be among the exhibitors. They hope to find more local business partners for the soap business, which uses glycerin that's a byproduct of the conversion of used cooking oil into biofuel.



Triumph gives its used cooking oil to Freedom Fuel and Wash Tyme, which use it to make soap used in Triumph's kitchen and biofuel used in Blue Moon's tractors.

If You Go

The 3rd annual Buy Local Bucks County Locavore networking event will be held from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday at Superior Woodcraft, 160 N. Hamilton St., Doylestown. The event is open to local businesses and business groups.

Participating Bucks County businesses include Crossroads Bake Shop, Blue Moon Acres, PorcSalt, Doug's Cakes, Brad's Raw Chips, The Coffee Scoop, Laurie's Chocolates, Wycombe Vineyards, Triumph Brewery, Confection Perfection, Just Foods, The Market at Delaware Valley College, Rose Bank Winery and Wash Tyme. The event is sponsored by Superior Woodcraft, the Doylestown Business and Community Alliance and Independent We Stand, a national organization of independently owned businesses.

"It's nice because it gives you a forum where all these businesses are open to talking," Rumbold said. "A lot of times it's hard to approach anybody. You catch somebody at a bad time, they're busy. This is where people are actively open to that sort of thing. That's what makes it

so great."

Rumbold's Bucks County Freedom Fuel supplies biodiesel to Blue Moon Acres for use on its farm in Pennington, N.J., said Ashley Lyons, the farm's sales manager. She's also talking with Rumbold about including Wash Tyme soap in the farm's new store in Pennington.

For Lyons, the Locavore event gives businesses the opportunity to network with other like-minded companies looking to do business locally.

"It's surprising each year to see the people who are really into this thing locally," she said. "You don't see them all in one place like that anywhere else. There isn't any other event like this."

Dan Weintraub, sales manager for Triumph, said the event helps introduce the brew pub and restaurant to potential customers.

"My job is to generate foot traffic into the restaurants," he said. "Events where people are local and they're local minded, they're the type of people we want in our restaurant. They're the people who live and work in the community. It's nice to build up a repeat clientele."

CriSSA Shoemaker DeBree: 215-345-3186; email: cshoemaker@phillyburbs.com; Twitter: @bucksmtbont

MONEY WRAP

PPL to increase spending on capital projects

PPL Electric Utilities will spend \$664 million this year on capital improvements to its electric delivery system that serves central and eastern Pennsylvania, including customers in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

The amount is 50 percent more than what the Allentown-based utility spent last year to increase reliability and address aging infrastructure.

More than 100 local projects are planned, including new substations, upgrades to existing facilities and technology, the replacement of older transmission lines and poles, and the improvement of distribution circuits. The company will rebuild three of its oldest power lines and will install 150 miles of fiber optic cable to connect 32 substations.

"This is much-needed work that will

reinforce our regional power grid," David DeCampli, president of PPL Electric Utilities, said in a statement. "These projects represent significantly greater investments in the critical infrastructure for Pennsylvania's economy and will provide hundreds of construction jobs."

PPL serves 1.4 million customers in 29 counties.

Former Nutrisystem CEO returns to join board

Michael Hagan, who served as chief executive of Nutrisystem Inc. for more than five years, is returning to the company as a member of its board of directors.

Hagan served as chairman and CEO of the Fort Washington-based weight loss company from December 2002 until May 2008, and was the architect of the company's direct-to-consumer e-commerce business model.

He's currently CEO, president and chairman of LifeShield Inc., a Lower Makefield company that sells wireless security systems to consumers. He will be lead independent director at Nutrisystem, where he will also serve on the board's nominating and corporate governance committee.

"Michael Hagan and I have been discussing his return to the Nutrisystem board for some time, and I'm delighted he has agreed to accept our invitation," Joe Redling, who succeeded Hagan as chairman and CEO, said in a statement. "His expertise as an entrepreneur and creator of consumer brands and innovative direct-to-consumer business models will be extremely valuable to me and to the entire board as we continue to navigate the challenging economic and competitive landscape while preparing to launch our products in new sales channels and on additional platforms later in 2012."

From staff reports

Recall



Johnson & Johnson is recalling all infant Tylenol on the U.S. market because some parents have had problems with newly designed bottles — just introduced three months ago — that the company had touted as a big improvement to make measuring the correct dose easier.

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