

JAN
FEB
2025



In the Know



Financial

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Your Checklist for a Financial Spring Cleaning

Soon, flowers will bloom, trees will bud and the weather will warm. Spring is an annual time of renewal.

That applies to finances, too. As we look forward to outdoor activities and longer days, what better time to consider a financial spring cleaning — refreshing and realigning financial strategies to ensure we're on track to meet goals.

Here are some key areas we can focus on together.

✓ **Review Your Portfolio** – First, we'll take a look at your current asset allocation. We'll ensure your investments line up with your risk tolerance and long-term objectives. If we find imbalances, we'll rebalance for optimal performance.

Reflecting on last year's portfolio performance is crucial. We'll celebrate the wins and address areas that might need improvement. We'll examine tax efficiency, looking for opportunities like tax-loss harvesting to enhance your tax situation.

✓ **Update Your Strategy** – Next, we'll revisit

your financial strategies. Have there been life changes that might alter your financial goals? It's important to reassess and adjust accordingly.

We'll also review your budget to ensure it supports your savings targets and lifestyle needs. And we will make sure your emergency fund is robust enough to cover unexpected expenses.

✓ **Identify New Opportunities** – The market is always evolving which brings new investment opportunities. By analyzing current trends, we can identify promising emerging sectors. Ethical and sustainable investments are increasingly popular options to explore if they align with your values.

We will introduce new financial products that might suit your portfolio and discuss diversification strategies to reduce risk.

Regular financial reviews are essential to thriving in an ever-changing financial landscape. We encourage you to "spring into action," stay engaged and keep the lines of communication open. Let's schedule your financial checkup to ensure your plans remain aligned with your dreams.



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- MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS -

January

Elizabeth J. - 90

Georgia H. - 80

Jon R. - 80

Miriam B. - 75

Vincie H. - 75

Madhuri K. - 75

Brad M. - 75

Nannette S. - 75

Betsy A. - 70

Dennis O. - 70

Rosemary S. - 70

Barbara H. - 65

Mary E. - 65

Clayton C. - 65

Pauline H. - 65

Brent S. - 60

Elizabeth D. - 55

Dakita L-I. - 50

Larry P. - 50

February

Dorris C. - 85

Janet R. - 85

Morgan B. - 85

Glendelia F. - 75

Becky P. - 75

Aurora B. - 75

Annette B. - 70

Randy McC. - 70

Larry W. - 70

Gail L. - 70

Laurie J. - 65

Karen M. - 65

Nancy P. - 65

Yvette J. - 60

Brian T. - 55

Tammy W. - 55

Jamesia J. - 50



*Happy Anniversary
& Congratulations*
ON ACHIEVING THESE MILESTONES

Michael & Susan

Harkness: Celebrating
45 years of marriage in
Colorado on January 11th.



Steve & Chelsie

Sargent: Celebrating
20 years of marriage in
Santa Barbara, CA. on
January 1st.

Special Thanks to our **LKJ Ambassadors**

Dennis Pierce

Bob Shafer

David Whittemore

Beatriz Varman

Jacqui Vera

Kathleen Reardon

Dana Rizzo

Lisa Torok

Janie Wilson

Beverly Spears

Debbie Olmsted

Donna Curry-Ward

Dee Pipes

Jennifer Connatser

Roby Fitzhenry

Donna Gray



*Our team strives to provide excellent service and quality products to all of our valued customers.
Sending new clients our way is the best possible compliment. We look forward to our continued friendship.*

5 Easy-to-Care-for Indoor Plants

Indoor plants enhance the beauty of your home and can offer benefits for your health. They improve air quality, boost your mood and create a soothing environment. Start with these plants and enjoy the wonders of nature indoors without the stress of demanding upkeep.

1. Snake Plant

The Snake Plant is known for its tall, sturdy leaves with diverse patterns. It's a great air purifier and requires minimal sunlight. Allow the soil to completely dry out between waterings.

2. Pothos

Pothos, with its heart-shaped leaves and long vines, is perfect for those who may forget to water occasionally. It can adapt to various lighting conditions but prefers low to medium indirect light. Water when the top inch of soil is dry.

3. ZZ Plant

The ZZ Plant has glossy, dark green leaves and is highly drought-tolerant, making it ideal for low to



moderate indirect light. Water every 2-3 weeks and let the soil fully dry out between waterings.

4. Spider Plant

Spider Plants have arching green leaves that hang down, making them visually appealing. They are also easy to propagate, making it easy to expand your indoor garden. They prefer bright, indirect light but can tolerate low light. When watering, keep the soil slightly wet and avoid overwatering.

5. Peace Lily

The Peace Lily is elegant with its dark green leaves and white flowers. It's particularly effective at removing toxins from the air. They usually prefer low to medium indirect light and should avoid direct sunlight. Water weekly and keep the soil consistently wet.



WAYS TO Set S.M.A.R.T. Financial Goals

With the start of the new year, it's a great time to reassess your finances and set goals. However, many people find it challenging to stick to their goals. Without a clear roadmap, it's easy to lose motivation. S.M.A.R.T. goals provide structure and clarity, making it easier to stay inspired and on track.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Are:

- **Specific:** Goals should be clear and precise, such as reducing monthly expenses by \$500.
- **Measurable:** Quantify your goals with specific numbers, percentages or deadlines to track your progress. A measurable goal might be "save \$500 a month."

- **Achievable:** Set realistic goals that consider your current situation. Realistically assess income sources and expenses.
- **Relevant:** Your goals should align with your objectives and values, like budgeting for health care or travel.
- **Time-bound:** Break your goals into short-term and long-term benchmarks. For instance, "achieve expense reduction within six months."

Use S.M.A.R.T. goals to give yourself a clear plan and help turn your aspirations into achievable plans.



DOLLARS & SENSE

Risky Business: Aligning Risk With Reward

Understanding your risk tolerance is essential in investing, and it's important to reevaluate it regularly. Your comfort level with investment fluctuations may shift as market conditions and personal circumstances change. Periodically checking your risk tolerance helps ensure your portfolio aligns with your current goals and feelings about risk.

Over the past few years, especially in 2023, we've seen some interesting trends in the market. The Morningstar US Market Index jumped an impressive 26.4%¹, and by the fourth quarter of 2024, the S&P 500 returned an average of over 20% YTD². This market rally, largely fueled by technology and growth stocks¹, might have pushed your portfolio into riskier territory than you are comfortable with. During these market booms, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement and ride the wave without checking if the increased risk fits your comfort level. However, it's important to take a step back and reassess your risk exposure.

Determining your risk tolerance involves personal insights and objective measures. Investors typically begin with risk assessment questionnaires that consider age, income stability, investment goals and financial responsibilities. It's important to align your investments with your financial aspirations, whether that's buying a home, funding your grandkids' education or traveling the world in retirement (or all of the above).

Don't overlook the psychological aspect — how you perceive risk and react emotionally to market fluctuations matters greatly. Additionally, practical factors like your investment timeline and income stability can influence your risk tolerance. By considering all these elements together, you'll better understand the level of risk that feels right for you.

To help ensure your portfolio is allocated correctly according to your risk tolerance, start with these actionable steps:

- 1. Assess Your Risk Tolerance:** Take a moment to reflect on how much risk you're comfortable taking. Are you more of a conservative investor, or do you lean toward higher risk for potentially greater rewards?
- 2. Review Your Current Portfolio:** Look at your current investments. Are they aligned with your risk tolerance? A mix of asset classes can help balance out risk.
- 3. Diversify:** If you find that your portfolio is heavily weighted in one area, consider diversifying across different asset classes — like stocks, bonds and real estate. This helps spread risk and can enhance your potential returns.
- 4. Set Clear Goals:** Identify your financial goals. Knowing what you're aiming for can guide your investment choices and help you decide how much risk you should take.
- 5. Regular Check-Ins:** Just like checking your suitcase before a trip, schedule regular reviews of your portfolio. This will help you make necessary adjustments to stay on track with your risk tolerance and goals.

Following these steps helps ensure your investment strategy stays aligned with your financial objectives and risk tolerance.

¹ Tom Lauricella and Lauren Solberg. Morningstar. Jan. 2, 2024. "15 Charts on the Surprise 'Everything Rally' for 2023." <https://www.morningstar.com/markets/15-charts-surprise-everything-rally-2023>. Accessed Oct. 2, 2024.

² Curvo. Sept. 2024. "Historical performance of the S&P 500 index." <https://curvo.eu/backtest/en/market-index/sp-500?currency=eur>. Accessed Nov. 11, 2024.

Chill Out: Ways to Save This Winter!

For many, winter months can be especially expensive. Due to higher heating and energy use, gift-giving, festive events and health care for seasonal illnesses, everyone is looking for effective ways to save money. So, how can you save money during the winter?

In winter, flights and accommodations typically become more affordable due to decreased travel during the colder months. Airlines and hotels often offer enticing discounts and packages to attract customers during this time, leading to better deals for those who choose to travel in the off-season. These deals can make it easier for families and individuals to travel in the winter months rather than the more popular travel periods. Also, consider having friends or family pet-sit to help you avoid the high pet boarding costs, which can add up quickly during extended absences.

To stay warm at home during the colder months, use energy-efficient space heaters and heated blankets. These are designed to heat specific areas of your home, making them an economical choice. Smart thermostats can also help reduce energy expenses by allowing you to program your heating system to lower the temperature while you're asleep or away from the house, ensuring that energy is only used when necessary.

Planning potluck gatherings for holiday meals can also cut expenses. When each guest contributes a dish, it eliminates the need for one person to



provide an entire meal, spreading the cost and effort among everyone. And by rotating hosting duties, everyone can enjoy the event without placing the financial burden on a single individual, making the celebration more inclusive and enjoyable for all.

			2		5			
2		4				5	9	
	3					7		
		5	7			1	4	
	7		9		8		6	
	2	9			1	3		
		7					2	
	5	8				6		1
			1		3			

BRAIN GAMES

Sudoku

Game Rules

Fill in each square with one of the numbers 1 to 9 such that no number repeats in any row, column or 3 by 3 box. Grade is Easy.

FAMILY TIME:

KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR BY BUILDING AN ULTIMATE TIME CAPSULE



Building a time capsule is more than just gathering items; it's about capturing the essence of the present for future reflection. What better way to celebrate the new year than creating a time capsule with your children and grandchildren? Consider making a playlist of everyone's favorite songs to listen to while assembling the capsule or turn the activity into a mini party with snacks and drinks.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO GET STARTED



CHOOSING A CONTAINER

Select a durable, waterproof container to protect the contents. It could be a sturdy plastic box or a metal tin.



DECIDING ON A BURIAL LOCATION

If you bury the capsule, find a safe spot in the garden or backyard. Alternatively, you can store it in a dry and accessible place indoors.



SETTING A FUTURE DATE

Decide when you'll open the capsule. It could be a milestone birthday, a significant anniversary or a future New Year's Eve.

WHAT TO INCLUDE



HANDWRITTEN LETTERS

Have everyone write a note about their hopes and dreams for the future.



PHOTOS

Capture moments from recent family gatherings or everyday life.



ARTWORK

Let the children contribute their latest masterpieces.



SMALL TOYS OR TRINKETS

Include items that hold special significance.



NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Choose headlines or articles from the day you seal the capsule.



BOOKS

Select a favorite book or a bestseller from the year.



MUSIC PLAYLIST

What were the No. 1 songs from last year? What was everyone's favorite?



BUCKET LIST

Set some goals for the coming year. How many will you check off before you open the capsule?

Building a family time capsule is a creative way to usher in the new year, offering a precious gift to your future selves — and it doesn't have to be a one-time event. Consider making this a lasting family tradition. Remember to keep each capsule to compare how much you all grow and change from year to year!

Pie Pick Up

We had an absolute blast celebrating our annual holiday pie pick-up with our amazing clients! This cherished tradition grows sweeter each year, and so does our gratitude for the wonderful connections we’ve built.

We are excited to announce that the winner of the Gingerbread Cookie Competition is Michelle Cooper! Michelle handles new client onboarding and client service for LKJ Financial. Her classic, clean gingerbread man reflects her careful attention to detail! Congratulations, Michelle!




Here’s to making 2025 even more special—thank you for being part of our journey!

BRAIN GAMES

ANSWER KEY:

7	9	1	2	6	5	8	3	4
2	8	4	3	1	7	5	9	6
5	3	6	8	9	4	7	1	2
8	6	5	7	3	2	1	4	9
1	7	3	9	4	8	2	6	5
4	2	9	6	5	1	3	8	7
9	1	7	5	8	6	4	2	3
3	5	8	4	2	9	6	7	1
6	4	2	1	7	3	9	5	8

cut here 



RECIPE HOMEMADE HOT APPLE CIDER

This hot apple cider is seasoned with cinnamon sticks, cloves, allspice berries, orange and lemon for a cozy drink. Start with only six strips each of the orange and lemon peel, and adjust to taste.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups apple cider
- ¼ cup real maple syrup
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 6 whole cloves
- 6 whole allspice berries
- 1 orange peel, cut into strips
- 1 lemon peel, cut into strips

HOW TO MAKE IT:

1. Pour apple cider and maple syrup into a large stainless-steel saucepan.
2. Place cinnamon sticks, cloves, allspice, orange peel and lemon peel in the center of a washed cheesecloth; fold up the sides of the cheesecloth to enclose the bundle and tie it up. Drop the spice bundle into the cider mixture.
3. Place the saucepan over moderate heat and cook until cider is very hot but not boiling, about 5 to 10 minutes.
4. Remove cider from the heat. Discard the spice bundle.
5. Ladle cider into big cups or mugs, adding a fresh cinnamon stick to each serving if desired.

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Meet the Team



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MICHELLE COOPER
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SARI ENRIQUEZ
Marketing & Events



KRISTINA KIENG
Client Care



ASHLEY GOTTLIEB
*Financial Paraplanner
FPQP®*



UPCOMING DATES

JANUARY

01 Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Opens

01 New Year's Day

20 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

FEBRUARY

02 Groundhog Day

14 Valentine's Day

17 Presidents Day