

# Business & Finance

on the Web: <http://www.oeonline.com>

## MORE THAN MONEY



SID MITTRA, PH.D.

## Measure your portfolio with Benchmark

If you are a typical investor, as a New Year's gift you probably received a letter which reads something like this: "Last year your portfolio return was 15.97 percent and its standard deviation was 11.96 percent." What do performance numbers really mean? Should you be happy or sad? Should you send a "Thank You" to your investment managers or fire them?

These are legitimate questions begging for answers. Fortunately, there are benchmarks which are tools to help you gauge how your investments are doing.

### Key Benchmarks

Investment market benchmarks include indexes, which represent the general markets in which funds or accounts invest, and fund averages, which tell how other comparable actual funds have performed. The first index enables you to make comparisons with the appropriate market; the second provides comparisons with other similar investments.

Comparable is the key word here. You should use benchmarks to compare assets that are roughly similar. For example, fund benchmarks compare investments that are similar in size, composition, and risk profile. Because people may invest in mutual funds with a range of investment objectives, from pure speculation to medium-term savings to retirement investing, they should always gauge performance against a comparable benchmark.

### S&P 500

The S&P 500 is a popular performance benchmark for the many stock funds that match its composition — large capitalization issues, dominated by New York Stock Exchange-listed companies. But it is an inappropriate benchmark for those investors who seek to capture the long-term growth of the overall market by investing in a substantial number of small and medium-sized companies as well as large ones.

### Russell 3000

The Russell 3000 is an unmanaged market index of the 3,000 largest U.S. companies of all three exchanges. It represents about 98 percent of the domestic equity market, and is designed to give a full representation of the U.S. stock market trading on the New York Stock Exchange, the American Stock Exchange and in the

Please see MITTRA, B6

Sid Mittra, Ph.D., CFP, is professor emeritus of finance at Oakland University and owner of Mittra & Associates, a Rochester Hills financial consulting firm. This column was critically reviewed by Professor Jerrold Grossman of OU. You can e-mail questions or comments to Sid Mittra at [smittas@oeonline.com](mailto:smittas@oeonline.com).

## Company keeps kids safe at home

BY BARB PEIT TEMPLETON  
SPECIAL WRITER

Keeping kids safe isn't always easy, but weeding out the dangers that lurk in your own home is one way to start.

Parents hoping to get a good look at a wide variety of child proofing possibilities for their homes can do so by visiting a model at the Child Safety Company, Inc. in Southfield.

The model, designed with dozens of special features, was created inside a one bedroom apartment by Child Safety owner Aaron Ozrovitz. The unit is the first of its kind in the state of Michigan.

"Customers kept asking me if I had a showroom they could come to or a retail store where they could look at all the products," Ozrovitz said. "I figured looking at a bunch of stuff in packages on shelves wasn't going to show them anything, so I set-up the apartment."

The "showroom" boasts all kinds of childproofing devices such as covers for electric cords, magnetic locks for cupboards and "unclimbable" magnetic locking gates. And there's the most recent addition to the company's product line, covers for computer outlet strips many people have lying on the floor in their home offices.

Customers can visit the unique apartment seven days a week but tours, which take roughly one hour, are by appointment only.

Adding the personal touch of a private tour and showroom seemed a natural progression for the unusual business Ozrovitz, 34, founded in 1991.

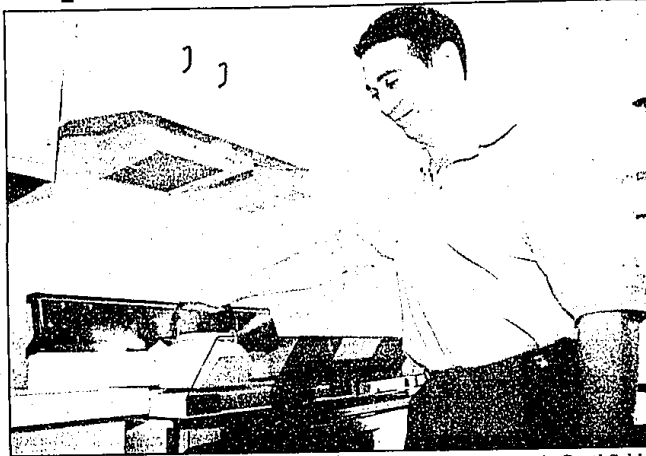
He got the idea for the professional Child Safety Company after a friend described how his child was hurt in a house accident. When Ozrovitz's buddy tried to get safety devices to install at home, they all seemed cheap and inferior.

"He told me many of the products he bought broke as he tried to attach them to his cupboards. And in a week's time his child could by pass all of them anyway," Ozrovitz recalled. "Then my friend called day care providers, hospitals and doctors but nobody knew of a company that serviced child home safety."

It just so happened that Ozrovitz was looking for a business venture and the child safety idea seemed pretty sound.

"I wanted to get into a business of my own, something in service that would be a big need in the community and wouldn't go out of style," Ozrovitz said. "I had six to ten hours of research interviewing parents, pediatricians and day care workers. Nobody he encountered had heard of a company that installed products, but all were enthusiastic about the idea."

"I just came away with the idea that I wanted to help children from injuring themselves in their homes," he said.



Keeping it safe: Aaron Ozrovitz, owner of the Child Safety Company in Southfield, shows off a safety device to keep children from touching hot items on the stove at the company's model apartment in Southfield.

The next step was to find superior products that he could customize to each client's home. He dug up information on dozens of manufacturers before deciding which safety devices he wanted to put his company name behind.

"My goal was to have top notch high quality products that would not only last for the first child but for the second, third and fourth one, too," Ozrovitz said.

Once he established plans including the manufacturers he could count on, Ozrovitz was ready to open for business. His company was the first of its kind in Michigan.

Flooding the area market with flyers and information packets about his new firm soon had the phone ringing at Child Safety Company, Inc.

"I started this business with \$2,000. Now, I'm into 250 homes a year," he said.

Today he orders products from 30 different manufacturers. Most specialize in just one or two safety devices.

"These products are not readily available in the stores," Ozrovitz said. "They are made in the U.S. and Canada and designed by engineers."

Remaining so particular about his product line has been well worth the effort for Ozrovitz who has numerous satisfied customers and lots of repeat business.

"People don't want something that's going to look like an eyesore and really stand out," Ozrovitz said. "The great thing about my products is that they are hidden or like with the gate, it can be snapped down in five seconds by the parents and put in a closet when company's coming over."

Mari Corveta, of Beverly Hills, who had her first child last July, called Ozrovitz last fall to help child-proof her home. She found not only the products but the personal service and assistance offered by Ozrovitz to be priceless.

"It was just a great experience all around," she

Please see SAFETY, B6

## Community House offering Internet classes

### AMERITECH

guides.

The Community House has been providing adult continuing education classes for 75 years.

"We've established a reputation for meeting the current educational needs of adult learners," said Janette Engelhardt, immediate past president of The Community House. "So when 78 percent of the Professional

Women's Breakfast group said they'd be interested in Internet classes, we looked for a way to provide them."

Engelhardt said Ameritech's grant will make it possible to provide these hands-on classes to approximately 160 women in fall and spring classes.

Ameritech plans to work closely with The Community House to develop the curriculum. This is a very natural partnership," said Lisa Hanway, Ameritech's director of contributions.

Please see AMERITECH, B6

## State agency urges residents to save, invest safely

In conjunction with a national summit on saving and retirement, Michigan's securities regulators urge residents to invest "safely" by developing a financial plan, monitoring their investment firm, and being on guard for fraud.

The June 4-5 summit in Washington D.C. was established legislatively through the bipartisan SAVER Act (Savings are Vital to Everyone's Retirement Act of 1977). More than 100 delegates from the private and public sectors will discuss ways to help promote pension and individual savings.

"Although many individuals haven't developed a personal financial plan, more and more people are considering investment options," said Kathleen Wilbur, Director of the Michigan Department of Consumer & Industry Services (CIS). CIS is Michigan's state agency responsible for approving securities and registering securities brokers, agents and investment advisors.

"The current stock market is very good, which attracts more potential investors," said Wilbur. "Unfortunately, too many people don't have adequate investment knowledge, which

makes them tempting targets for con artists. To avoid losing hard-earned money through fraudulent or questionable investments, Michigan residents should get extensive investment information, which is available at all libraries or through our office."

Julie Croll, Director of the CIS Corporation, Securities and Land Development Bureau also urges investors to research stocks before buying.

"The stock market has performed phenomenally in recent years, with the Dow average rising 20 percent or more annually," Croll said. "With a

Please see INVEST, B6

## Local retail sales blossom in April

Michigan retailers posted their best sales of the year in April, bouncing back from a March dip that broke a string of eight positive months.

The latest Michigan Retail Index survey found that 59 percent increased year-to-year sales for the month, while 16 percent reported no change and 25 percent saw a decline.

The 69 percent was the best since last December's 63 percent. The 25 percent figure was the lowest since December 1994.

The Michigan Retail Index is a joint project of the Michigan Retailers Association and the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

"Retail sales were strong throughout the state and across the industry in April," said Larry Meyer, CEO of the Michigan Retailers Association and former director of the Michigan Department of Commerce.

"Consumers loosened their purse strings as the economy continued to hum along and spring hit the state."

Marketplace features a glimpse of Oakland County Business news and notes. Write: Business Marketplace, Eccentric Newspapers, Birmingham Eccentric, 805 E. Maple 48009, our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

Carole Allard has been named account executive to consumer and government accounts at Hermonoff & Associates, in Farmington Hills. Before she joined the firm, Allard was an associate publisher for The Antiques and Collectibles Shopper.



Cook

Daniel E. Cook of Birmingham has been named president of S&H Fabricating and Engineering, Inc. in Walled Lake. Formerly the commercial director of

Bundy Automotive, Cook's new position follows the acquisition of S&H by Bundy Automotive which was announced on May 20, 1998. Cook joined Bundy Automotive in 1985 as a sales director.



DeVilling accounts for automotive clients, maintains contact with the media and coordinates media relations strategies.

Pat Diugokinski has been appointed to the position of vice president of logistics for Worldwide Aftermarket, Federal Mogul Corporation. He formerly

served as director of logistics integration and development at the Southfield-based corporation.



Forhan of St. Clair Shores has received the position of vice president and relationship manager for Crestmark Bank. His responsibilities include handling asset-based small business financing. He formerly worked for Michigan National Bank.

Ralph Gerson of Bloomfield Hills will serve a three-year term on the Henry Ford Muse-

um and Greenfield Village Board of Trustees. He works as executive vice president and director of Guardian Industries Corporation.

Bill Hadden has been named senior vice president of Kohn, Bittker and Diamond, a Troy-based advertising agency. He joined the company in 1990. Hadden's new responsibilities include agency account management and planning, management of agency diversified account groups, and overseeing the promotion and public relations.



Hannah for the company's retail, business services and support functions.

Dave Kramer has been promoted to senior manager at Parker, Wittus and Company, P.L.C., a Certified Public Accountants firm located in Southfield.

Don J. Lee of Rochester Hills has been named vice president and general manager of DCT Packaging Systems in Warren. He will be responsible for procurement, sales and engineering, as well as managing con-

tainerization programs for customers. The company is an integrator of packaging and production for the automotive industry.



Logar has been named executive vice president and creative director at Campbell-Ewald's C-E Communications Division. She has worked for the company since 1992 and previously managed her own business. She will head a staff of 51 writers and creative directors.

Todd Markusic has been appointed director of automotive accounts for J.D. Power and Associates in Troy. He will perform a variety of duties which

Please see MILESTONES, B6

## BUSINESS MILESTONES