



John Stancavage: Investment outlook optimistic

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For the past few years, Wall Street has been a tough road to maneuver, full of potholes and the wreckage of once-successful companies.

But 2013 has been a smoother ride, as some economic patches have been made and debris cleared.

As a result, money that's been stacked on the curbs is flowing back into the market and the Dow Jones industrial average is setting records.

In that sense, it's a relief to be publishing our annual Tulsa World Investment Guide during a time when there's actually some optimism about stocks. Our 20-page report is included as an insert in today's paper.

On the other hand, the recent success of many stocks makes our pickers' job that much harder.

Unlike many annual investor guides, we don't just focus on which stocks did the best in the past 12 months. (That wouldn't do you much good now, would it?)

Instead we ask local money managers to predict what stocks of local interest will perform the best in the coming year.

Why should you listen to these professionals? For one, many have been generating wealth for clients for decades. But let's not stop there. Why don't we take a look at how their predictions from last year's guide fared?

Our pickers voted Tulsa-based contract driller Helmerich & Payne as the No. 1 stock in the 2012 edition. Fred Russell, principal of Fredric E. Russell Investment Management, said then that H&P should benefit from rising energy prices. He also was impressed with the company's fiscal conservatism.

"There are a lot of things to like," he said.

During the summer of 2012, the stock started a slow climb after slipping to less than \$40 a share.

Since the publication of last year's guide, however, H&P's shares have soared like one of its gushers and were trading last week near a 52-week high of \$67.

The No. 2 stock pick of 2012, Devon Energy Corp., is up about 14 percent from a year ago, and the No. 3 vote-getter, Chesapeake Energy Corp., has risen a whopping 62 percent.

We hope you'll be interested to read what the pickers have to say about this year's selections. Intriguingly, Helmerich & Payne has pulled off the rare feat of repeating as the top pick.

Our guide is the product of three months of work by our staff and the pickers and was expertly edited by financial writer Laurie Winslow.

Winslow, who has overseen the guide for many years, would like me to remind everyone that our guide does not represent an endorsement of these stocks by the newspaper. Instead, we hope it will be a starting point for your own research and discussions with a professional.

So start your investment engines. The light is green.

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