

# IN TOUCH

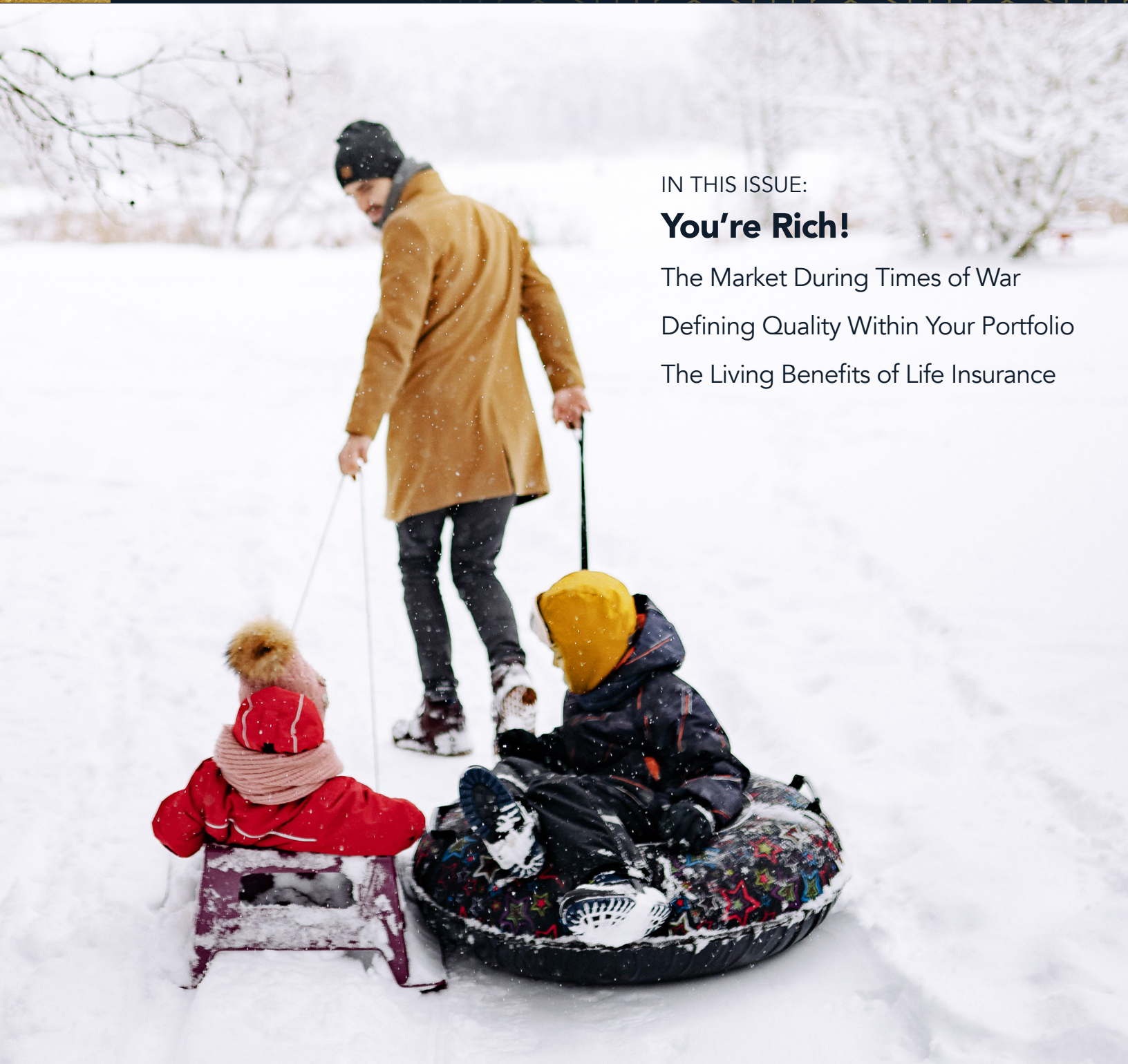
IN THIS ISSUE:

## **You're Rich!**

The Market During Times of War

Defining Quality Within Your Portfolio

The Living Benefits of Life Insurance



# YOU'RE RICH!

I remember when my kids were young, they talked about being “rich” quite often. They defined their friends’ “richness” by who had the biggest house, fanciest car or who got the newest hot toys for Christmas. My children would ask if we were rich, and for some reason, that question made me so uncomfortable. Yes, we had the means to do what we wanted, and our kids had all the necessary things and so much more. In all reality, we were rich.

Every single one of us is rich by someone else’s standards. In a world filled with social media, unrealistic expectations, immediate gratification, and the neighbors’ bigger house, we often don’t recognize our own wealth.


Think about our ancestors who never imagined a world where antibiotics were readily available or that you could go to sleep in one part of the country and wake up someplace else. My grandparents would be amazed at the richness we have because our food and household products can be delivered to our door within one day of ordering them online. The luxuries we have, and often take for granted, provide great riches.

The United States is the richest country in the world. We don’t often feel that wealth because of a culture of gluttony and there is always an opportunity to work more, work harder or work smarter. I often ask my clients – when is enough actually enough?

In a recent survey of 2000 Americans by Lending Tree, 59% said they do not believe they will ever become wealthy. But achieving wealth is subjective and defined differently by everyone, so how is this possible?

As a financial advisor, I get to meet people with all levels of wealth and the one thing that everyone can agree on, wealth cannot buy health and happiness. Some clients struggle with finding harmony between maintaining wealth (accumulation), spending wealth (distribution) and giving away to others (philanthropy). The question we all struggle with during different phases of life is “What is the true definition of wealth?”. Those of you who have reached the golden years of retirement often say time is the true valuable and many of our youngsters who are trying to start an independent life believe that their wage defines true wealth. Many of us even feel wealthy and poor at that same time. How is that possible?

One of the favorite things I have heard is that true wealth is what you have left over after all your money is gone.

In the tapestry of life, wealth is a thread that weaves through various cultures, landscapes, and aspirations. Each of us defines our own wealth uniquely, and hopefully we can all agree that we are rich in so many ways. The question now is... how can we best use our privileges and riches to help others? This is where true joy comes from. 

***“One of the favorite things I have heard is that true wealth is what you have left over after all your money is gone.”***

**Julie Ellenbecker-Lipsky,**  
CFP®, CDFA®

President and Senior Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker Investment Group



# WHAT A YEAR!

**Ellenbecker Investment Group just wrapped up its 27th year in business and as we start our 28th year I have taken some time to reflect on last year. We can all look back and remember certain years that stand out to us and are embedded in a happy memory... 2023 was just that year for us.**

In the business world, few honors are as prestigious and meaningful as being recognized for exceptional leadership, a high level of ethics and integrity, a best place to work, and making a positive impact as a small business in our community. It may seem as if all these accomplishments happened last year, however, they were nearly 30 years in the making and we are proud to highlight the accolades with a commitment to staying true to our core values for the next 30 years. We are committed to continuing to raise the bar for our employees, clients and the community.

#### **Better Business Bureau's Torch Award for Ethics:**

This is the fourth time, since 2005, that we have been honored with the Better Business Bureau's Torch Award for Ethics which we deem a cornerstone for our success. As a company, we are committed to honesty,

transparency, and fairness in all our dealings, from customer interactions to our employee's well-being and community growth. This award has kept us focused on "always doing the right thing" which is a fundamental principle that guides us. We firmly believe that ethical conduct, integrity, and living by our core values is not optional but essential to the success of our business. We will never deviate from growing a business with ethics as the guidepost.

**Best Place to Work:** We are humbled and proud to have won the Milwaukee Business Journal's Best Place to Work Award. One of my goals in starting EIG, 27 years ago, was to create a company where employees wanted to come to work. By choosing us, you're not just partnering with a company; you're partnering with a team dedicated to excellence, that is driven by excellence. We know happy and motivated employees deliver exceptional service, they are more creative, and they care about each other, which translates into improved client experiences and a high-level of service. It is our commitment to our clients, to provide a healthy, safe workplace where our employees treasure our clients and partners as much as we do. The best thing about this award is that it is a confidential rating process fully driven by employee feedback. We are committed to continued listening of our employees so we will always be considered the best place to work.

**Waukesha County Business Alliance (WCBA) Small Business of the Year Award:** In September we were honored with the Small Business of the Year Award which demonstrates our unwavering commitment to

excellence and innovation to you, our employees, and our community. We are proud of our significant and meaningful presence in Waukesha County and we are committed to continue to make the Waukesha community a great place to live and work.

**Tempo Leadership Award:** Julie Ellenbecker-Lipsky, our President and leader, has been recognized with the Tempo Leadership Award, an honor that speaks volumes about her outstanding contributions to the world of business and influence. As my daughter, and the leader of EIG, I could not be more proud. Her commitment to mentor and influence others within EIG and our community reinforces the legacy of leadership excellence associated with the Ellenbecker Investment Group.

**Corporate Volunteer of the Year:** Heather Deaton, EIG Wealth Advisor, won Corporate Volunteer of the Year at the Nonprofit Excellence Awards, hosted by BizTimes Milwaukee. Heather serves as president of the board for Fondy Farmers Market, Fondy Farm Project, and is involved throughout the community in a number of ways. We're so proud of Heather and the example she sets by living the core values of EIG.

**C-Suite Stars, HR Award:** In December, EIG's Chief People Officer, Cara Olson, earned the title of Milwaukee Business Journal C-Suite Star! As our firm continues to evolve and grow, Cara's HR Award is well-deserved as she continues to create and support EIG's incredible workplace and culture.

While reflecting on last year, I am so proud of our new home, our headquarters. We purchased this new building over 2 years ago and took the necessary time to create a place that would be extraordinary for our clients and employees. We know that owning a building signifies a long-term commitment to our clients, employees, and our community. Our new building marks a significant milestone in our journey and we are confident this space will enhance your experience with us. It is more than just a building, it's a place designed to cater to your needs and provide a welcoming atmosphere where we can continue to serve you at the highest level. Our commitment goes beyond brick and mortar and remains steadfast. Your trust in us is the foundation of our business, and we pledge to continue delivering the outstanding service and quality you deserve. Our employees are the heart and soul of EIG and their dedication to excellence is what sets us apart. Our new home provides them with an exceptional environment to serve you even better.

As we settle into our new home, our focus remains on you, our valued clients. We are excited and humbled by the honors we have received and the opportunities this new chapter brings; we are dedicated to providing you with the best possible experience. 🏠

**Happy New Year!  
Karen**



**Karen J. Ellenbecker**  
Founder & Senior Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker Investment Group



**Kristina Schnuckel**  
CFP®, AIF®

Director of Client Experience  
& Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker Investment Group

# RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS IN 2024

With 2023 behind us, it's time to give some thought to your retirement savings plan for 2024. Most retirement plan annual contributions have been indexed for inflation and will allow for additional savings throughout the year. Understanding your options can help you make the most of your New Year's savings goals.

## 401(k), 403(b), 457, and TSP

- If you are eligible to contribute to an employer sponsored 401(k), 403(b), 457, or government Thrift Savings Plan, your contribution limit is increasing from \$22,500 to \$23,000 for 2024.
- The catch-up contributions for those age 50 and over remains at \$7,500. This means that if you are approaching retirement, you can contribute up to \$30,500 for the 2024 tax year.

## Simple IRA

- Employees who have access to a Simple IRA plan through work can now contribute up to \$16,000.
- The catch-up contribution for those age 50 and over remains at \$3,500 for 2024.


Both IRA and Roth IRA contributions have increased from \$6,500 to \$7,000. The catch-up contribution for those age 50 and over remains at an additional \$1,000. The ability to make a deductible IRA contribution is still dependent on an income phase-out, but that phase-out has increased for 2024 as well.

- For single tax filers that are covered by a workplace retirement plan, the phase-out range is increased to between \$77,000 and \$87,000.

- For married couples filing jointly, if the spouse making the IRA contribution is covered by a workplace retirement plan, the phase-out range is increased to between \$123,000 and \$143,000.
- For an IRA contributor who is not covered by a workplace retirement plan and is married to someone who is, the phase-out range increased to between \$230,000 and \$240,000.
- The phase-out range for married couples filing separately did not change this year and remains between \$0 and \$10,000.

The income phase-out for making a Roth IRA contribution has also been increased for 2024.

- For single or head of household tax filers, the phase-out range for making contributions to a Roth IRA has increased to between \$146,000 and \$161,000.
- For married couples filing jointly, the income phase-out range is increased to between \$230,000 and \$240,000.
- Like a deductible IRA, the phase-out range for married filing separately did not adjust for inflation for 2024 and remains between \$0 and \$10,000.

Saving through an employer sponsored plan can take some of the guesswork out of retirement savings, but you can still have a successful savings strategy even without an employer match. Talk to your advisor to find out what savings opportunities you may be eligible for. If you are not maxing out your retirement savings account, now is a great time to challenge yourself and see if you can bump up your savings rate! 



**Jamie Williams, CFP®**

Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker  
Investment Group

# DEFINING QUALITY WITHIN YOUR PORTFOLIO

When it comes to defining quality within your investment portfolio, it is important to understand it's not only the quality of your investments you're using, but also developing a quality approach with your overall planning. Taking the time and committing to educate yourself with a basic understanding of how your portfolio is constructed can help with achieving long-term success. There are a wide range of factors that can be considered as part of a quality approach to investing. Understanding how your portfolio is structured is an important aspect of your personal financial planning.

Here are a few things to consider when it comes to ensuring a quality approach:

## GETTING YOUR ALLOCATION RIGHT

Walking through the process of understanding your investment objectives is key. This exercise entails finding how comfortable you are with being more aggressive towards growth, or conversely a more conservative approach that encompasses a downside protection allocation that is geared more towards capital preservation or income.


## SETTING THINGS UP TO SAVE EFFICIENTLY AND PROPERLY

Starting with a positive mindset and developing a habit-forming savings strategy can be quite impactful over time. Work with your financial and tax advisors to structure your portfolio in a manner that allows you to efficiently make additions into the proper account types that utilize tax efficiencies such as Roth IRAs or Health Savings Accounts

(HSA's). This will help you achieve flexibility when it comes to liquidity or future distribution options from a planning perspective. Also, using a turnkey approach that works for your given situation such as dollar cost averaging, will allow you to make additions to your portfolio without worrying or thinking about what the markets are doing.

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU OWN AND ASSOCIATED COST FACTORS

It is not only important to have a general understanding of your asset mix; stocks and bonds and related fund allocations, but also to know that you are using the right types of instruments in your portfolio, staying away from things that are overly complex and hard to explain. It is essential to work with advisors who have identified a process for investment selection that incorporates peer fund ratings, measures of performance to benchmarks, and internal expense ratios. Finally, it is important to have a clear understanding of costs and management fees that are associated with your accounts.

Working with the right team of professionals can help you establish a plan that incorporates these factors. Tax guidance, estate and distribution planning will also help with achieving long term success. When it comes to putting everything together and looking at your accounts and investments in one place the picture looks complete. You can then understand how your portfolio is tailored to meet your objectives and certainly make any needed adjustments along the way. Please reach out to your EIG Wealth Advisor to help you lay the groundwork for long-term success. 

**IN THE SEA OF SIMILARITIES...  
EIG ELLENBECKER INVESTMENT GROUP...  
STANDS OUT®**

# WHAT I'VE LEARNED AS A FINANCIAL ADVISOR

I attended a financial seminar, and the speaker asked us to think about our first memory or experience around money. My tablemates struggled with this task. I did not. I can clearly remember when my mother shared that we (mom and dad) just bought a 4-family apartment home and things would be a little tight. Fast forward to my adult life, when I shared the seminar task with my mother, she couldn't remember the conversation at all. Interesting, because that conversation impacts my relationship with money to this day. Money can bring great joy and it can bring great stress.

I am sharing this personal story with you because I am blessed with a career that gives me insight into how an individual's relationship with money was formed and how people respond to their ever-changing financial goals and concerns. Let me share what I have learned over the past 30 plus years of working in the financial industry.

## 1. Markets Go Up and Markets Go Down

It is much easier to stick to your investment plan when the markets are going up. It can be challenging to remind clients not to react to the market and a down market gives us an opportunity to buy low or harvest losses. I've learned that investing is very emotional. Most clients can recall the emotion they felt when the market was down – very few can remember the emotional ride when the market was up.

## 2. Health Is Wealth

As you age, it is just as important to plan and invest in your physical health just as it is important to plan to invest for your financial health in retirement. As Steve Jobs faced his death, he reminded us that wealth cannot buy health and to take the time to breathe and enjoy all the little joys in day-to-day life. I have learned that some people focus on health when they begin retirement as opposed to throughout their lives. In fact, clients will often convey they can't wait to retire to get to the gym. There is a phrase, it is never too late to start AND.... when we are talking about physical health, it is never too early.

## 3. You Do You, and I'll Do Me

Choose a path in life that celebrates your uniqueness. Don't feel the need to follow the trends in your social circle or the marketing seen in magazines, on television, or social media.

## 4. Don't be an overachiever

Don't overspend and don't over save. Both avenues have their issues. It's clear on the spend side. The over saver never enjoys their efforts in earning the wealth or enjoying their wealth.

## 5. Gratitude

I've learned that my happiest clients, in any phase of life, are the clients that practice gratitude and the art of giving back in time & talent or financial resources.

In the end, most, if not all, financial decisions are made to positively impact the physical, mental, or financial health of the people closest to their heart – spouse, children, parents, partners, and friends. This is why financial planning and money decisions are so very personal and emotional. 🍷

***“I've learned that my happiest clients, in any phase of life, are the clients that practice gratitude and the art of giving back in time & talent or financial resources.”***

**Jean Range, CFP®**  
Senior Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker Investment Group



**WHEN YOUR INTUITION SPEAKS WE LISTEN®**

# PROTECTING YOUR PRIVACY IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING



Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, connecting us with friends and family instantly. However, as we scroll through our feeds, we're constantly bombarded with ads tailored to our interests and behaviors. While these ads can be convenient, they often come at the cost of our privacy.

Social media platforms gather an extensive amount of data about their users, including browsing history, likes, shares, and comments. Your online activities are being tracked and analyzed to create a detailed profile of your preferences and habits. This allows advertisers to create highly targeted and personalized ads, which raises significant privacy concerns and the potential misuse of personal data.

Information can be vulnerable to data breaches or unauthorized access, putting your sensitive information at risk. Moreover, the extensive collection of data raises questions about consent and transparency. Users often unknowingly provide access to their personal information by accepting lengthy 'terms and conditions' without fully understanding the implications.

There are steps you can take to navigate the platforms more safely and have greater control over your privacy.

**Review Privacy Settings:** Take the time to review and adjust your privacy settings on social media platforms. Limit the amount of information that is shared publicly or with third-party apps.

**Limit Ad Tracking:** Most social media platforms offer options to limit ad tracking. Adjust these settings to restrict the data collected for targeted advertising purposes.

**Be Wary of Permissions:** Before granting permissions to apps or websites, consider what information they are requesting access to and whether it's necessary for their functionality.

**Regularly Clear Cookies and History:** Clear your browsing history and cookies regularly to minimize the data available for advertisers.

**Use Ad-Blocking Tools:** Consider using ad-blocking browser extensions or tools that limit the number of ads you see while browsing.

**Educate Yourself:** Stay informed about privacy policies and changes in terms of service on social media platforms. Being aware of how your data is used can help you make informed decisions.

While protecting your privacy is essential, it's equally important to establish boundaries for your social media usage for a healthy balance and personal well-being:

**Designate Tech-Free Time:** Allocate specific times of the day or week as tech-free zones. Disconnecting from social media allows you to focus on other aspects of life and reevaluate your relationship with these platforms.

**Limit Screen Time:** Set a daily or weekly limit on your social media usage. Many devices allow you to monitor and manage your screen time to be more mindful of how much time you spend online.

**Engage Mindfully:** When using social media, be intentional. Follow accounts that inspire, educate, or entertain you in a positive way, instead of mindless scrolling.

**Prioritize Real-Life Connections:** Don't let social media replace real-life interactions. Nurture your relationships offline and spend quality time with friends and family without the distraction of screens.

Establishing these boundaries can lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

As we continue to navigate the digital landscape, finding the right balance between staying connected and safeguarding our privacy is essential. By prioritizing both privacy measures and healthy boundaries with social media, we can create a more mindful and secure online experience for ourselves and future generations. 🌐



**Heather Deaton**  
CFP®, CSRIC™  
Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker Investment Group



Presented by Ellenbecker Investment Group, this unique show features non-profit organizations each week and explores ways for listeners to have an impact in our local community and the world.

Hosted by Jill Economou, EIG's Director of Community Relations, on Sundays at 10:00AM on WISN AM 1130. Listen to past shows at [ellenbecker.com/radio](http://ellenbecker.com/radio).



## The Heart of Milwaukee Philanthropy®

### Guests from Q4 2023

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ABCD - After Breast Cancer Diagnosis          | H.A.V.E.N. - Hounds and Vets Empowered Now |
| American Heart Association                    | Kenosha Achievement Center                 |
| Author Linnea West (My Anna)                  | Kenosha Human Development Services         |
| Author Nancy Majors (A Wretch Like Me)        | Kimberly Joy Ministries                    |
| Beats for Heartbeats                          | Life Striders                              |
| Carroll University                            | Milwaukee Armed Services                   |
| Childrens Wisconsin Foundation                | Nurses Affecting Change                    |
| Christmas Clearing Council of Waukesha County | Sleep in Heavenly Peace                    |
| Crohn's & Colitis Foundation                  | Special Olympics of Milwaukee              |
| Dousman Elementary School                     | The MACC Fund                              |
| ECFA - Evangelical Child & Family Agency      | The Salvation Army of Waukesha County      |
| Fellowship of Extraordinary Women             | The War Memorial Center                    |
| Froedtert & The Medical College of Wisconsin  | USO of Wisconsin                           |
|   | Wisconsin Lutheran College                 |


 Tammy Niemann

 Wealth Advisor  
 Ellenbecker Investment Group

# THE MARKET DURING TIMES OF WAR

With the continual news coverage of the Middle East, many of us are concerned about potential United States involvement. We are also curious about the impact this could have on the markets.

To understand the impact U.S. involvement could have, let's take a historical look at the markets during times of war. It is important to note that these are general trends, and there were many other factors influencing the stock market's performance during these periods such as economic conditions and monetary policies.

## World War I

Initially, the U.S. stock market saw a decline during the war due to uncertainty and economic disruption. However, the market rebounded towards the end of the war as the U.S. economy benefited from increased wartime production.

## World War II

The U.S. stock market saw a decline during the early years of the war, partly due to the Great Depression. However, the market experienced significant growth as the U.S. entered the war and benefited from increased government spending and industrial production.

## Korean War

The U.S. stock market initially experienced a decline at the beginning of the war, but later recovered and saw growth during the latter half of the conflict. The market was resilient due to increased defense spending and a stable economy.

## Vietnam War

The U.S. stock market had a mixed response to the Vietnam War. Initially, the market experienced growth,

largely due to the strong U.S. economy during the 1960s. However, as the war escalated and U.S. casualties increased, the market became more uncertain, and there were periods of decline.

## Gulf War

The U.S. stock market initially experienced a decline as investors reacted to the geopolitical tensions. However, the market rebounded quickly as the war was relatively short and had limited impact on the U.S. economy.

## Afghanistan and Iraq Wars

After the September 11th attacks, the U.S. stock market experienced a significant decline. However, the market recovered over time, and despite ongoing conflicts, it experienced periods of growth as the economy expanded.

Overall, the stock market's reaction to war has varied but has often shown resilience and recovery in the long run. The markets respond most to uncertainty. We are unable to predict how markets will be affected during certain periods of war. We have no control over the economy, inflation, taxes, Geo, political, tensions, or presidential elections. The one thing we do have control over is the risk that is inherent in your portfolio. It is important to work closely with your advisor to make sure you are taking the appropriate amount of risk to weather any period of volatility. Feel free to reach out to your wealth advisor at Ellenbecker Investment Group to better understand how your portfolio will be impacted during periods of wartime. 🌀

**TRANSPARENCY = TRUST®**

## KEEPING AN INTERNATIONAL ALLOCATION IN YOUR INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO

As an investor the phrase of having a well-balanced investment portfolio is a phrase we may have all heard before. With the recent, on average, outperformance of the United States stock market over international equities it may be easy to question, why should I have international exposure in my investment portfolio?

It is often viewed with a global investment allocation having uncorrelated asset holdings during times of increased volatility could assist in weathering the "storm". With the advancement in technology and increased market integration around the world, both U.S. and international investments can decline in tandem during cases of large market declines. It is important to remember research has demonstrated this as the case in the short term, but extending our time frame out has shown that maintaining a global investment allocation can create the potential for a significantly faster recovery (Swedroe, 2023). A case for this is countries recovering at different rates not knowing which country will recover sooner than another; it is important to stay globally diversified in an investment allocation (Swedroe, 2023). It may come as a surprise that over the last twenty years the U.S. has only performed the highest in equity returns out of the developed equity markets once, in the year 2014 (Dimensional Fund Advisors, 2023). Maintaining an investment portfolio with a global investment allocation will allow a portfolio to potentially recover sooner during

large market declines as well as allow for the ability to maintain growth through a globally diversified investment position.

Allowing recent market performance to create biases in a particular country may cause an overallocation in an investment portfolio resulting in holding a concentrated country-biased position. With the long-term investment philosophy of "sell high and buy low" maintaining an overconcentration in a portfolio where a specific countries equity valuations are higher than other counterparts may cause a portfolio to underperform a globally diversified portfolio due to the inability of the country to continue increasing returns (Swedroe, 2023). One such recent instance occurred in the 1990s with Japan coming off a decade of outperformance of both U.S. and global equities. Due to several issues including high and rising debt-to-GDP (Gross Domestic Product) ratio and an aging population resulted in the MSCI Japan Index returning 0.9% per year from January 1990 through May of 2023 (Swedroe, 2023).

The U.S. has and will be a strong equity performer for numerous reasons and should be maintained in your investment portfolio. An appropriate investment risk allocation based on your goals and time horizon in a globally diversified portfolio is important in discussion with your advisor in reaching your specific goals. As has been the case, past performance is not indicative of future results. 🌀

### References

Larry Swedroe. "Why International Diversification Is Still the Prudent Strategy (While Keeping Behavioral Biases, Risks, And Results in a Healthy Perspective)."

Kitces.com, 5 July 2023, [kitces.com/blog/international-diversification-equities-economic-theory-risk-management](https://www.kitces.com/blog/international-diversification-equities-economic-theory-risk-management).

Dimensional Fund Advisors. (2023). Equity Returns of Developed Markets [PowerPoint Slide].

### MOVE FORWARD WITH EIG®



**Ryan Lundeen, CFP®, CIMA®**  
Wealth Advisor  
Ellenbecker Investment Group

## THE LIVING BENEFITS OF LIFE INSURANCE

**Evan Brown**  
Insurance Liaison  
Ellenbecker Investment Group



Life Insurance is a risk management tool whose primary function is to provide protection against the financial hazards associated with someone's passing. However, the benefits of life insurance for the living are frequently overlooked and advantages that everyone should be aware of. This brief overview explores how life insurance can be accessed for living benefits in times of need.

Most life insurance policies contain provisions for accelerated benefits in advance of death. This benefit allows policyholders to access lump-sum advances of the contract's death benefit when an insured has been diagnosed terminally ill or has a life expectancy of under 24 months.

A newer version of the accelerated benefit feature allows for the payment of benefits to address long term care (LTC) and chronic illness needs. Unlike traditional accelerated benefits that are built-in and free of charge, LTC/Chronic Illness benefits must be added at the time of issue at an additional cost. Policies that include an LTC/Chronic Illness Rider pay an accelerated benefit at a rate of 2% - 4% of the death benefit every month, thereby offering a steady stream of monthly payments to address the cost associated with long term care expenses.

For the owners of permanent life insurance, policy cash values are a great way to save money on a tax-deferred basis. Cash values can be accessed from a contract as direct withdrawals or loans. Properly structured policy withdrawals or loans can be tax-free and used at the policyholder's discretion. Cash values are frequently used to supplement retirement savings, address unforeseen emergencies, cover educational costs, and fund one-off events. As a policy owner, you're entitled to withdraw money from a cash value life insurance policy for whatever reason and at any time you desire.

Finally, several major insurance companies offer a host of other living benefits. Return of premium features (all or part of your premium refunded at a specified date), critical illness riders (lump sum benefits payable upon the diagnosis of a severe medical condition), and disability coverage (pays benefits for sickness & injury) are all additional benefits that can be added to a policy to enhance its usefulness during the lifetime of the insured.

Don't forget that life insurance can benefit both the insured and their beneficiaries. 🌀





## BOND YIELDS RETREAT AFTER SOFTER INFLATION DATA

**Richard Schiller, CFA, CPA**  
Portfolio Manager & Wealth Advisor, Pavlic Investment Advisors, Inc.

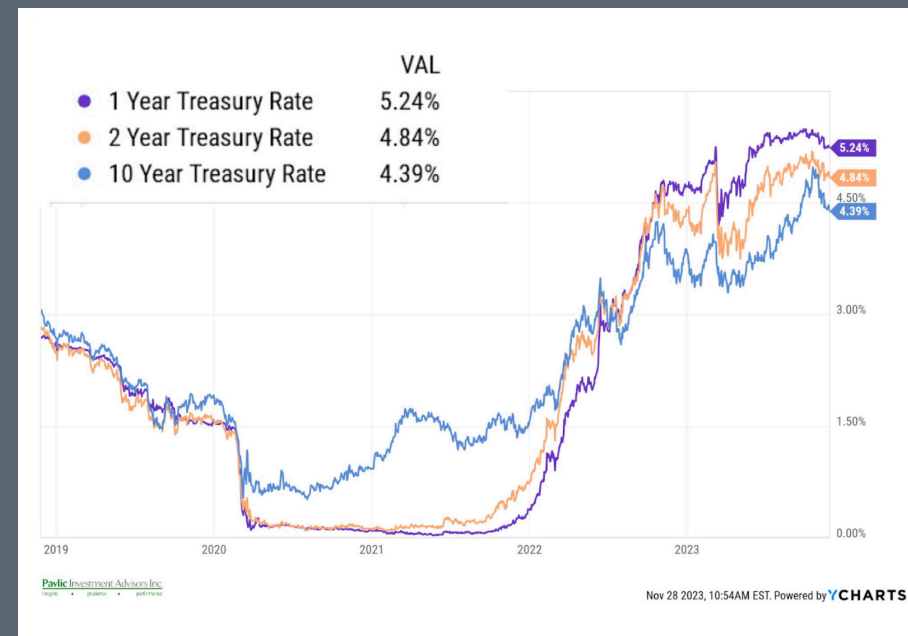
In late October, inflation data came in lower than expectations which has led market participants to believe that the Federal Reserve is done with their historic interest rate increasing regime. This in turn put downward pressure on the yield curve and upward pressure on equity markets. Lower yields equate to higher bond market prices—something we haven’t experienced in ~2 years as higher yields over the last two years have only pushed the market value of bond prices lower. However, while yields have moved down since the mid-October inflation print, this move lower is not much more than a blip on the radar when looking at 5-year historical data (US treasury yields chart below) and we remain in an elevated “higher for longer” interest rate environment.

The most important question we, as bond investors, are asking right now is what does this “higher for longer” interest rate environment mean for our bond portfolio? To start, we believe the Federal Reserve is done raising interest rates and we believe any additional rate hikes could result in a major policy mistake. This means that we should finally get a welcome reprieve from yields

moving higher which in turn means we expect higher bond prices in the future. Because we don’t expect rates to fall back anywhere close to the 2020/2021 levels, we also believe we will be able to earn satisfactory returns going forward as we roll our bond ladders. **We have been rolling the 10-year ladder to 2033 maturities at yields above 6.5% annually including both coupon interest and principal gain when holding the bonds to maturity and earn our \$100/bond par value back.**

While we believe rates will stay rangebound at these higher levels, our investment grade bond strategy by design does not attempt to predict the path of interest rates. Because our bond strategy looks to

minimize interest rate risk by staying short to maturity, the portfolio has not suffered large market losses compared to commonly held bond mutual funds and ETFs, especially those that have average maturities of over 10 years. With our typical investment grade bond ladder structured at 1-10 years in length in equal increments, our average length to maturity is ~4.5 years which helps us reduce interest rate risk while still generating ~6.5% annualized yields in today’s bond market environment. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to your EIG Wealth Advisor if you would like to discuss our investment grade bond strategy in greater detail. 📞



# EIG'S CORE VALUES



## PHILANTHROPY

We make our community a better place.  
We promote the welfare of others without expecting anything in return.  
We give in a variety of ways including money, time, and talent.

As an organization, and as individuals, EIG truly lives by its Core Values. We’re highlighting Philanthropy this quarter and invite you to keep an eye on your mailbox for our first-ever Philanthropic Year in Review. To learn more about all our Core Values, visit [ellenbecker.com/core-values](https://ellenbecker.com/core-values).

## QUARTERLY CHARITY PARTNER



**Hope Center Inc.**  
[hopecenterwi.org](https://hopecenterwi.org)

Hope Center is a non-profit organization that has been serving the basic needs of financial assistance, food, and clothing in Waukesha County for more than thirty years. Join EIG in the months of January, February, and March as we collect these items:

- **Personal Items:** Tissue, napkins, Clorox wipes, shaving cream, disposable razors, and travel-size items like body wash, lotion, toothpaste, shampoo/conditioner.
- **Adults:** XXL clothing, men’s jackets, long underwear, underwear, socks.
- **Children:** Clothing, underwear, socks.
- **Babies:** Newborn clothing, hooded bath towels, bibs, onesies, diapers (newborn & preemie), baby shampoo, lotion, and wash.
- **Financial Support:** Gas cards and bus passes (10-day or daily).

# WELCOME: New Team Members

## Cara McCarthy, Wealth Advisor Associate

Cara McCarthy joined Ellenbecker Investment Group in September 2023 as a Wealth Advisor Associate. She brings nine years of experience in the financial services industry. Her primary role is to support Julie Ellenbecker-Lipsky's team and ensure that our clients receive exceptional service and support. She has her Series 65 Uniform Investment Adviser designation. Cara graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Madison with a Bachelors Degree in Political Science and Geography. After spending most of her financial services industry tenure in Private Wealth Management Operations, she made the move to EIG to transition her focus towards financial planning. Cara lives in downtown Milwaukee. She enjoys traveling, playing tennis and golf, attending the MSO, and spending time with family and friends.



## Cameron Roth, Investment Operations Associate

Cam joined EIG in September 2023 as an Investment Operations Associate. His primary role is to support client care teams in providing exceptional service to our valued clients. Most recently, Cam worked as a recruiting manager for a financial staffing firm in Boston before making the decision to move home to Wisconsin. Cam graduated from the University of Massachusetts – Amherst in Spring of 2023. While there he studied sport management in their prestigious Isenberg School of Business and was a member of their NCAA Division I Men's Lacrosse team. He also graduated from Culver Military Academy as a three-sport varsity athlete and Infantry Battalion Commander. Cam lives in downtown Milwaukee with Zeus, his German Shepherd/Siberian Husky mix puppy. In addition to hanging out with Zeus, he enjoys spending time with family and friends and can often be found lifting weights or playing golf.



## Janet Otten, Client Relations Specialist

Janet Otten joined Ellenbecker Investment Group in October 2023, adding to the organization's Client Relations Team. With years of client service experience from non-profit organizations to Senior Living, her passion for developing positive relationships, service, and hospitality led her to EIG. When visiting our office, you'll likely meet Janet as she brings her positive outlook and friendly nature to the front desk. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Janet attended UW-Madison and is a fan of the Badgers, Packers, Bucks and Brewers. She lives in Brookfield with her two adult children and dog. When not at work, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, traveling, music, and the great outdoors.



## JOIN OUR TEAM

**We're growing and looking for just the right individuals to add to our team!** At EIG, we know people are our greatest asset. Do you think you or someone you know would be a great fit? If you'd like to learn more about working for Ellenbecker Investment Group, please visit [Ellenbecker.com/careers](https://ellenbecker.com/careers) or reach out to [hr@ellenbecker.com](mailto:hr@ellenbecker.com) to start a conversation!



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

To register and view the most current list of events, visit: [ellenbecker.com/events](https://ellenbecker.com/events)

To receive our weekly emails, please email: [info@ellenbecker.com](mailto:info@ellenbecker.com)

### JANUARY

					6
7					13
14			17		20
21			24		27
29					

#### EVERY SUNDAY

Money Sense on WISN AM1130	12:00 PM
Milwaukee's Philanthropic Community on WISN AM 1130	10:00 AM

#### EVERY SATURDAY

Money Sense on WISN AM1130	2:00 PM
----------------------------	---------

### FEBRUARY

					3
4			8		10
11					17
18					24
25			28		

#### JANUARY

17	Wisconsin Widows Connected (WWC)	5:30 PM
17	EIG Tax Portal Training (Client Workshop)	3:00 PM
24	Social Security Seminar	1:00 PM

#### FEBRUARY

8	Financial Webinar	5:30 PM
28	Women's Bible Study	5:30 PM

### MARCH

					2
3					9
10		13	14		16
17		20			23
24		27			30
31					

#### MARCH

13	Women's Bible Study	5:30 PM
14	Financial Seminar	10:00 AM
20	Wisconsin Widows Connected (WWC)	5:30 PM
27	Women's Bible Study	5:30 PM

## ICYMI (IN CASE YOU MISSED IT)

**Do you follow EIG on Facebook and/or LinkedIn? If not, you may have missed this exciting news from Q4 2023!**

EIG partnered with Versiti Blood Center of Wisconsin to host a blood drive in October! Thank you to our team, clients, and members of the public who joined us in giving back. Keep an eye out for future events by following EIG on social, signing up for our weekly email, and checking out our website, [ellenbecker.com](https://ellenbecker.com).

**Stay up to date on EIG's upcoming events, radio shows, and other important news by following us on social media.**



[facebook.com/EllenbeckerInvestmentGroup](https://facebook.com/EllenbeckerInvestmentGroup)

[linkedin.com/Ellenbecker-investment-group](https://linkedin.com/Ellenbecker-investment-group)

## HR UPDATE

### Employee of the Month

Congratulations to these employees for going above and beyond and being chosen as EIG's Employee of the Month!

- October:** Brent Adams
- November:** Ashley Olson
- December:** Cara McCarthy

### Employee Anniversaries

- Amy Anderson - 8 years
- Amy Andre - 2 years
- Breanna Jones - 1 year
- Debbie Just - 5 years
- Heather Deaton - 7 years
- Julie Ellenbecker-Lipsky - 28 years
- Karen Ellenbecker - 28 years
- Kate Murphy - 7 years
- Marina Ziolkowski - 2 years
- Ryan Fritz - 2 years
- Tammy Niemann - 1 year
- Tina Alfini - 5 years

### Anniversary Donations

- Adults with Congenital Heart Disease, Walk for 1 in 100
- Blessings in a Backpack
- Compassion International
- Discover Church Reachteams
- Fondy Farmers Market
- H.A.W.S. - Humane Animal Welfare Society
- Little Lambs Academy New Berlin
- Midwest Australian Shepherd Rescue
- Peace Lutheran Church
- Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin
- Soles for Jesus
- The Marleh Lehmann Scholarship Foundation



**Ellenbecker**  
Investment Group

(262) 691-3200

N21 W23350 Ridgeview Parkway  
Waukesha, WI 53188



# TUNE IN TO HEAR US ON THE RADIO

*The Voice of EIG®*



**Saturdays at 2:00pm, Sundays at Noon | WISN AM1130**

Tune in as Ellenbecker Investment Group Wealth Advisors share their unique financial perspective as they interview local and global economists, attorneys, tax professionals and other interesting guests.



**Sundays at 10:00am | WISN AM1130**

Presented by Ellenbecker Investment Group, this unique show features non-profit organizations each week and explores ways for listeners to have an impact in our local community and the world.



**Listen to past shows at [ellenbecker.com/radio](http://ellenbecker.com/radio)**

Advisory services offered through Ellenbecker Investment Group (EIG), a Registered Investment Advisor. Registration does not imply a certain level of skill or training. EIG does not provide tax or legal advice; please consult your tax or legal advisor regarding your particular situation. Diversification and asset allocation do not guarantee positive results.