

# STRATEGIC Journal

September/October 2023



**Don't Be Frightened  
by Retirement**

Learn the mistakes to avoid so  
you can plan for your future with  
confidence | Pg. 6

# Editors

Retirement shouldn't be scary! In this edition, we'll give you tips and tricks to ensure you aren't spooked about saving for the future.

It's important to understand healthcare costs, to not overlook inflation, and most importantly...to not procrastinate when it comes to your retirement!

See what the SWD team has been up throughout these last couple of months. SWD sponsored the Twisted Pink Gala and helped raise over \$290,000! SWD Cares also helped the Hamilton Co. Humane Society for their annual Woofstock 5K & Dog Walk.

From Labor Day cookouts to Spooky Halloween gatherings, we've compiled a list of tasty treats that are sure to please all party goers! These creative recipes include festive ice cream sandwiches, ghostly mummy bark, and jack o' lantern stuffed peppers if you're up for a challenge.

Be sure to check out our staff spotlight to learn more about Laurin Scaffidi. As an integral part of SWD's operations, Laurin interviews candidates for open positions, creates fun and exciting events for employees to participate in and handles client billing and HR tasks.

Interested in attending our Retirement Planning University course? Know someone that might like to join? Check out the back cover for a full tuition scholarship!

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## Strategic Journal

### Editorial Team:

Mackenzie Abel, Rebekah Anderson,  
Nicole Gonsoroski, and Ellen Rohr

### Design and Layout:

Aaron Hooper

### Advisor Contributors:

Mike Reeves, Thomas Reilly, and Dillon Widdows



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

# Matthew Dicken

As summer winds down, I wanted to take this opportunity to give you an update on the state of the economy.

Our forecast for the year remains unchanged, with higher-than-average volatility and an overall positive outlook. So far this year, that is what we've seen. The good news is that most of the volatility we've seen has been positive, and patient investors have been rewarded for their discipline. As of August 10, the S&P 500 is up 16.39% YTD, a solid 3.38% higher than our last update through June 12.

However, once again, we see market jitters, as the first half of August has been rife with colorful headlines such as: "Fitch's US Debt Downgrade", "Trillion Dollar Credit Card Debt", and "Slower July Job Growth." While these headlines may spark concern, it's important to consider scale and context. August is typically a slow news month, as earnings season has mostly wrapped up and politicians take their leave from legislating. So, what better way is there to generate clicks than to create concern? Let's address these three headlines one by one.

First, Fitch's Frightful Fiscal Forecast. While credit ratings serve a purpose, it's crucial to remember that they are created by thinking and feeling people with opinions—not unlike us. Remember when Standard and Poor's downgraded the US debt in 2011? That downgrade came shortly after a US congressional debt-ceiling standoff amidst a Eurozone debt crisis. Now? Fitch cited (among other things) the debt-ceiling standoff in June and the Congressional Budget Office's updated June forecasts—which mostly confirmed what had already been projected. We believe that much like S&P's 2011 downgrade, it's unlikely that Fitch's credit downgrade has any staying power on market movement long-term.

Now, to the trillion dollars in consumer debt. While there are several ways to view credit card debt, we'll keep it simple by looking solely at delinquencies. As of this writing, 90-day credit card delinquencies are around 8%, much in line with pre-pandemic levels and below the levels seen before the 2007-2009 financial crisis, and the ratio of credit card debt to bank deposits has been trending downward for over a decade. While the

trillion-dollar number sounds scary and elicits clicks, context is as important as ever. Will increasing variable interest rates prevent consumers from increasing their personal debt? Only time will tell.

Finally, let's address the slowing job growth in July. Remember that job growth is a lagging indicator. An economy experiencing growth creates more jobs, but growth in job numbers doesn't necessarily grow the economy. Because our job at Strategic Wealth Designers is to look forward, it's important to remember that job growth, like so many other indicators that are hyped up in the headlines, reflects what has already happened, not what's to come. A reduction in job growth doesn't equate to a recession, but it does indicate a slowdown in the rate of growth of the economy. That may sound scary, but it's a good thing. The Fed has been hiking interest rates to slow the economy. Slowing job growth suggests that it is working. This gives the market a light at the end of the rate hike tunnel. Many analysts think job growth is still too high for the Fed to achieve its 2% inflation target. Whether or not they're wrong remains to be seen.

As we move toward the end of the year, expect to see an influx of headlines related to seasonal myths, such as the "September Slump" or perhaps the Santa Claus rally in Q4. While history may suggest that certain months follow a seemingly positive or negative trend, major swings in the last 100 years have significantly affected overall returns. These are not reliable indicators, nor do prominent investors use them.

As always, it's crucial to stay disciplined in your strategy to avoid timing the market. We will keep a close eye on market developments. Remember, we have positioned our clients' portfolios for long-term success using stocks and non-correlated assets such as precious metals, commodities, real estate, private equity, and assets like structured notes and annuities.

As we move toward the end of Q3 and the beginning of Q4, we will keep you informed of what changes we're making to ensure your future success. Thank you as always for being part of the SWD family!



# Charity Update



STRATEGIC WEALTH  
*Cares*



**Mackenzie Been**  
CHARITY DIRECTOR

## Fern Creek Elementary – Louisville, KY

Thank you to all who came out to help out with the Fern Creek back to school event on July 29th! We had so much fun seeing all of the kids and helping them get everything they need to start the school year off right!

We also had the privilege to sponsor Fern Creek's "Boo Hoo" breakfast for their kindergarten class and parents! It was a great way to send their children off to school for the first time. There were some tears, but doughnuts and juice made it a little more bearable.



## Twisted Pink – Louisville, KY

It was an honor to be able to sponsor the Twisted Pink Gala 2023. We were able to help raise \$290,000 for this event and support our very own Nancy Barnes, who is a survivor!

## Hamilton Co. Humane Society – Indianapolis, IN

We had the pleasure of sponsoring the Woofstock 5k & Dog Walk on August 12th to support the survivor program, which provides life-saving medical care to hundreds of animals in the care of the Humane Society. We are pleased to announce that it was a record-breaking event for them with 822 participants and a total of \$130,000 raised! Thanks again to all our staff and clients who came out to help them prep for their event!





## Habitat for Humanity – Denver, CO

Our Denver team and clients had the opportunity to help build a home for a very deserving family! We were able to cut and install siding on the house we were working on! Thank you so much to our staff and clients for their efforts and hard work!



### UPCOMING:

We will be partnering with Habitat for Humanity in our Cincinnati market in September. "Habitat for Humanity works in more than 70 countries — we have helped more than 46 million people improve their living conditions since 1976." Habitat works with volunteers to build and repair homes to make them safe and affordable for local families. We are grateful to be able to partner with Habitat again for the 3rd consecutive year! If you are interested in volunteering please reach out to our Charity Director, Mackenzie Been, at (877) 934-7687 ext. 323.



To volunteer for any of these events, email Mackenzie at [mbeen@swdgroup.com](mailto:mbeen@swdgroup.com) or scan the QR code to visit our website!



# Don't Be Frightened by Retirement

Planning to be secure and comfortable in retirement is a goal that requires careful consideration and strategic decision-making.

Here at SWD, our advisors strive to guide you towards a financially sound retirement, and part of that process involves highlighting potential pitfalls that could jeopardize your retirement dreams. Here are several common mistakes that individuals should steer clear of to ensure a prosperous retirement journey.

## **Procrastination: Delaying Retirement Savings**

One of the most significant mistakes people make is procrastinating when it comes to saving for retirement. Time is a powerful ally in the world of investing, as compound interest has the potential to significantly grow your nest egg over the years. The longer you wait to start saving, the more difficult it becomes to catch up, often necessitating larger contributions to make up for lost time. To avoid this pitfall, start saving as early as possible, even if it's a modest amount.



## Ignoring the Power of Diversification

Investing all your retirement savings in a single asset or asset class can be a recipe for disaster. Diversification is a fundamental strategy to manage risk. Spreading your investments across different sectors, industries, and asset classes can help mitigate the impact of market fluctuations on your portfolio. A well-diversified portfolio is more likely to weather market volatility and provide stable returns over the long term.

## Overlooking Inflation

Inflation is the gradual increase in the cost of living over time. Failing to consider the impact of inflation on your retirement savings can erode your purchasing power, making it crucial to invest in assets that have the potential to outpace inflation. Stocks, real estate, and inflation-protected securities are examples of investments that can help protect your wealth against the effects of rising prices.

## Underestimating Healthcare Costs

Healthcare expenses tend to rise as we age, and underestimating these costs can pose a significant threat to a comfortable retirement. Medicare might not cover all your medical expenses, so it's wise to allocate funds specifically for healthcare needs. Exploring supplemental insurance options and building a healthcare contingency fund can provide a safety net for unexpected medical expenses.

## Failing to Adjust for Changing Circumstances

Life is unpredictable and circumstances can change unexpectedly. Failing to adjust your retirement plan to accommodate life events such as job loss,

divorce, or a significant financial windfall can lead to financial strain. Regularly review and adapt your retirement plan to ensure it aligns with your current situation and goals.

## Being Too Aggressive or Too Conservative

Investment decisions should be aligned with your risk tolerance and financial goals. Being overly aggressive in pursuit of high returns can expose you to unnecessary risk, while being overly conservative might limit your potential for growth. Strike a balance between risk and reward by working with your financial advisor to develop an investment strategy that suits your unique situation.

## Not Seeking Professional Guidance

Attempting to navigate the complexities of retirement planning without professional guidance can lead to costly mistakes. A qualified financial advisor can provide personalized insights, create a tailored retirement plan, and help you avoid common pitfalls. Their expertise can help you optimize your financial strategy and give you peace of mind as you approach retirement.

Achieving a comfortable retirement requires foresight, discipline, and careful planning. By avoiding these common financial pitfalls, you can increase your chances of attaining your retirement goals. Remember that your retirement journey is unique, and seeking advice from a knowledgeable financial advisor can make all the difference in securing a prosperous and worry-free retirement. Start early, stay informed, and make wise decisions to pave the way for a brighter financial future.

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Our team of financial advisors would love to meet with you to help you feel secure and confident in your plans for retirement! Come see us in one of our offices or online! Scan the QR Code or visit our website at [swdgroup.com](https://swdgroup.com)







# STAFF SPOTLIGHT *Laurin Scaffidi*

## **Laurin Scaffidi, Director of Culture joined the SWD family in 2022!**

Her favorite part of SWD is the people. She says she couldn't ask to work with a better, more supportive, and encouraging group of people that truly care. Her favorite memory at Strategic Wealth Designers was getting to meet all the people she's hired at the SWAG awards. She said it was amazing to meet everyone face to face and see how happy they were to be here.

Laurin was born and raised outside of Charlottesville, VA in a small town called Whitehall. She moved to Charleston, SC for college, then Skagway, Alaska, and back to Charleston, SC. Then she relocated to San Juanillo, Costa Rica, and now has returned back to a smaller town outside of Charlottesville called Troy, VA.

Laurin enjoys adventuring with her two daughters. Together they enjoy hiking, kayaking, playing in the woods, swimming, and floating in the river.

Laurin is a mentor, member of the Epic Team, and received the Rookie Rockstar award at SWD's annual SWAG awards. SWD is so lucky to have Laurin!







### Is your current profession what you wanted to be when you grew up?

I never envisioned myself in the finance world, although my dad has always been a big finance guy. As a kid, I always wanted to be a veterinarian. I've always loved animals.

### Describe a day in your life

Wake up, get myself together for work, and get my kids up and ready for the day, then start working. I usually take my lunch early to get a workout in (run or lift weights usually, but this is an everyday MUST do for me). My days at work are pretty different each day, but a healthy mixture of meetings, interviewing candidates for open positions, and then administrative things related to HR or client billing. When I get done working, my husband and I try to do something fun with the girls like go down to the river, go swimming, go to the park or play with friends in the neighborhood. Dinner together as a family, and then relax (or do school work now that I'm back in Grad School) once the girls go to bed.

### What is something on your bucket list?

To travel to every country in the world.

### What is your most memorable experience?

The obvious one would be the day my girls were born. A less obvious one would be the day I stepped foot on Antarctica with my dad. It was his 7th continent and my 6th. I inherited my travel gene from him, so it was pretty cool to be there when he hit his final one at 72 years old!

### What's your idea of a perfect vacation?

Ideally someone giving me unlimited funds to travel around to every country, but my perfect vacation includes a healthy amount of adventure and relaxing. I want to do something epic like skydiving over Blue Hole in Belize or the Devil's Pool in Zambia.

### What is something unique about yourself that we would never guess?

I kicked and punted for my high school football team. My dad taught me because I was a soccer player and he always said I was the boy he never had. I tried out just to prove I could do it, but it turned out I was pretty good. It used to be something I was embarrassed by, but now it gives me a backbone when I tell my girls they can do anything!

### What was your first job?

I worked on a dressage (fancy horse) farm over the summer when I was 13. I did all of the very glorious work like shoveling horse poop.

### What is your favorite Sports Team?

Penn State Nittany Lions Football. I've been going to games since before I could walk! WE ARE!



# Recipe Roundup



Dress up your next holiday party spread with these appetizers and sweet treats!

## Cookies & Cream Mummy Bark

### Ingredients

- 2 cups white chocolate chips
- 8 chocolate sandwich cookies
- Candy eyes



### Preparation

1. Chop cookies into quarters and set aside. Save the cookie crumbs that fall aside when you are chopping the cookies!
2. Place the white chocolate in a microwave safe bowl. Microwave on half power for 2 minutes. Stir and return to the microwave for 20 second increments, stirring between each one until the chocolate is smooth. Transfer 1/4 cup of the chocolate into a resealable plastic bag and set aside.
3. Set aside the large cookie pieces and add the collected cookie crumbs into the chocolate and stir to combine.
4. Pour chocolate onto a foil lined baking sheet. Spread the chocolate to an even layer, about 1/8 inch thick. Press the reserved cookie pieces into the chocolate. Put the baking sheet in the fridge or freezer for 2-5 minutes until the chocolate is completely cooled.
5. Snip the corner of the plastic bag and drizzle the reserved chocolate over the cooled chocolate and cookies. Press the candy eyes into the drizzled lines in pairs to create mummy eyes.
6. Return to the fridge or freezer until completely cooled. Use a butter knife to cut into the chocolate to break into pieces and serve. You can also store the chocolate in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.



# Jack O' Lantern Stuffed Peppers

## Ingredients

- 4 bell peppers in your choice of color
- 2 cups Mexican rice
- 1 shredded chicken breast
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 can black beans rinsed and drained

## Preparation

1. Bring a large pot of water to boil.
2. While you are waiting for the water to boil, rinse peppers, slice off the tops and hollow out the insides, be sure to remove any seeds and the white part inside. Use a small paring knife to cut out a jack-o-lantern face.



3. When water is boiling, put the peppers and tops in and allow to cook for about 5 minutes until peppers are tender.
4. Remove from water and set aside to cool.
5. Mix the cooked rice, shredded chicken, cheddar cheese, and black beans together in a large bowl
6. Fill each pepper with the chicken and rice mixture and top with extra cheese, if desired. Replace pepper top back on top.
7. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes until cheese is melted and pepper is done to desired tenderness.

Alternately, once peppers are stuffed, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate, when ready to cook, preheat oven to 350, remove plastic wrap and bake for 1 hour.

# Patriotic Ice Cream Sandwiches



## Ingredients

- Ice Cream Sandwiches
- Red, White, & Blue Sprinkles

## Preparation

1. Unwrap each ice cream sandwich one at a time.
2. Place the festive sprinkles onto a plate.

3. Place the ice cream sandwich down onto the plate with the ice cream down so the sprinkles stick to the ice cream. Coat all four sides.
4. Place the ice cream sandwich back into the freezer to freeze again. Continue to do this with each ice cream sandwich.
5. Serve when you are ready and enjoy!

## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

# Steve & Lynne Nye

We had the pleasure to get to know our clients Steve & Lynne from Texas a little better.

### Can you tell us a little bit about yourselves?

We both grew up in a small town in Nebraska at a time when life was simple and that's how we've tried to live our lives and take pleasure with the little things. Steve worked multiple jobs to support the family but we were making it. Unfortunately, a workplace injury happened and turned our world around not only once but twice—and you can't forget about 9/11/01. But when your only option is not to fail we figured it out. A couple of times we were advised to give up and declare bankruptcy—we didn't. We started with baby steps and we were very intentional but we were able to completely come out of debt and build our future so retiring was a real option. Never give up, never quit, and don't listen to the people that tell you that it's too late.

### How did you become a client with SWD?

We attended a Retirement Planning University.

### How did you meet? What does your family look like?

We both grew up in the same Nebraska town and met each other at the local softball fields. We have one daughter and one son, 2 grandsons and 2 granddaughters.

### Do you have any pets?

We currently have a 12 year old golden retriever named Kona and a 4 year old goldendoodle named Beau. We could not live without Steve's two dogs!



### What did you want to be when you grew up?

Steve: Professional sports athlete.

Lynne: A veterinarian.

### What is your most exciting/favorite job that you have had?

Steve: As a teenager I loved to bale hay.

Lynne: I worked for a R&D company in Boulder, Colorado, and working with scientists on the concept of "Maybe I didn't get the anticipated results, but this is what I learned." This concept was carried across all divisions of the company.



### What is a memory that you will never forget?

Lynne: There isn't a specific time but once the kids were in school, Steve and I would have a lunch date most days. Very simple—sandwiches, sitting in the car at a park and listening to Paul Harvey. We made sure to take the time to spend time together and leave work behind for a while.

### What advice would you give someone to help them retire successfully?

Lynne: Get and stay out of debt. Stay and get healthy both physically and mentally.

### What is a piece of life advice you have for people?

Never give up! We've had to change directions and start over a few times and there have been accidents, health scares, us making poor decisions but we've worked as a team and kept moving forward.

### What is your favorite Halloween memory?

Lynne: A co-worker dressed up as a burnt Big Tex. *Note: Big Tex is a 52 foot cowboy that greets people at the Texas state fair and caught on fire in 2012.*

### What are you most looking forward to during retirement?

Steve: Golfing, woodworking and improving on the guitar.

Lynne: Spending time with the grandkids and completing/learning more crafts. I would also like to learn Pickleball.

### What is your favorite place that you have traveled?

Lynne/Steve: We both love Hawaii.

Steve: With my job I have been able to play golf at some of the best courses around with Quivira Golf Club, Cabo being my favorite.

### What is your favorite place to visit in Dallas?

It has to be Texas Rangers stadium—Globe Life Field.

### When have you felt the proudest and why?

Lynne: The day I graduated from college. I was a non-traditional student because I didn't start college until our kids were in school and then had to work during the day and go to school at night. It took a long time but it was so worth it.

### What is the best thing that has happened to you this year?

Lynne: I was able to leave my job and now after having time to focus on my physical and mental health I'm going to be paying it forward and become a health coach.

### What has been your most meaningful accomplishment so far?

Steve: I've succeeded in a technical industry without a degree.

Lynne: We've been able to become debt free and enjoy the freedom and peace of mind.

### Who has been the most influential role model in your life?

Lynne: Steve's grandmother was the most positive/grateful person I have ever been around. She didn't have an easy life but decided to love everything and always looked for the silver lining.

### Fun fact about you?

Lynne: I was an aerobic instructor in the 80's.

Steve: I did Color commentating at an FM radio station for High School basketball and loved it!



# News & Updates

## New Hires & Moves



**Karin Eppert**

Administrative Assistant  
Cincinnati, OH



**Veronica Gillotte**

will be meeting with our  
clients in the Miami office!

## New Office



**Miami, FL**

One Alhambra Plaza, Floor PH, Office No. 1473  
Coral Gables, FL 33134



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As summer came to a close, the Wine & Wisdoms continued on! In Atlanta, our guests got the true VIP experience. Attendees were treated to a private Home by Dark Performance with singer and songwriter Tony Arata, best known for writing Garth Brooks' hit song "The Dance."



## UPCOMING *Wine & Wisdoms*

### PHOENIX, AZ

Thursday, September 7th  
State Farm Stadium

### DENVER, CO

Saturday, September 9th  
Denver Botanic Gardens

### CINCINNATI, OH

Thursday, September 21st  
Great American Ballpark

### INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Saturday, September 23rd  
Topgolf

Wine and Wisdom events are one of a kind experiences brought to life by the SWD team. We hope to see you at one of our upcoming events! Scan the QR code or visit [SWDgroup.com/wine-and-wisdom](https://swdgroup.com/wine-and-wisdom)





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