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Mich. firms outpace overall market

Majority of publicly traded state firms see value rise in 2012

BY BRIAN J. O'CONNOR

Investors in the state's largest publicly traded companies had plenty of reasons to celebrate on New Year's Eve. Out of 64 Michigan firms that make or sell everything from pizza and auto parts to washers and real estate, all but 13 saw the value of their shares increase during 2012.

All told, Michigan stocks handily beat the overall stock market, providing an average return of about 19 percent versus 13.4 percent for the Standard & Poors 500 Index.

The biggest gains came from financial stocks and shares in companies that build homes or depend on home sales to move their products. Despite the continuing sluggishness of the economic recovery, the slow-but-steady improvements have brought stability to the finance sector and pushed housing to the brink of a turnaround at long last.

"These are cyclical companies and industries, and we are in an expanding economy," said David Kudla, CEO and chief investment strategist of Mainstay Capital Management in Grand Blanc.

"It's slowly expanding, but they're benefitting from it." ...

...In the housing category, shares of Bloomfield Hills-based homebuilder Pulte Group climbed 188 percent, while demand for home appliances pushed shares of Whirlpool Corp. of Benton Harbor up 114percent. ...

...The biggest consumer discretionary segment in Michigan is represented by the auto companies, which saw the rebound in sales continue, climbing by 17percent from 12.8 million light vehicles last year in North America to about 15 million this year. Besides automakers, shares of most suppliers did well, including TRW Automotive Holdings Corp. of Livonia (64 percent); Perceptron Inc. of Plymouth (24percent); and Southfield's Lear Corp. (18percent). ...

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