

WALL STREET

Financials help stocks post second week of gains

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U.S. stocks advanced, capping the first back-to-back weekly gains since February, after a late rally in financial shares overshadowed slumping consumer confidence and weaker sales growth at Microsoft Corp.

Fannie Mae, the largest source of money for U.S. mortgages, led financial shares to a two-month high after Morgan Stanley said earnings may top estimates next year.

American Express Co. posted the best gain in the Dow Jones industrial average as overseas growth boosted results. Conoco-Phillips and Schlumberger Ltd. helped lead gains in 30 of 36 energy companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 index after gasoline climbed to a record. Microsoft dropped 6.2 percent, limiting the market's advance.

"It's not too early to get into some of the financials," Harry

Clark, the Philadelphia-based chief executive officer of Clark Capital Management, which oversees about \$1.3 billion, said in an interview with Bloomberg Television. "I'm looking for a pretty good second half of this year."

The S&P 500, which swung between gains and losses about 25 times, rose 9.02 points, or 0.7 percent, to 1,397.84 and advanced 0.5 percent on the week. The Dow Jones industrial average added 42.91, or 0.3 percent, to 12,891.86. The Nasdaq composite index retreated 5.99, or 0.3 percent, to 2,422.93. Almost two stocks rose for each that fell on the New York Stock Exchange.

Fannie Mae climbed \$2.90, or 10 percent, to \$30.93.

Stocks opened the day higher after a UBS AG report that the worst is over for bank write-

downs helped spark gains in financial shares. The advance was erased after the Reuters/University of Michigan index of consumer sentiment fell more than economists forecast to the weakest level since 1982. The market resumed its climb as higher crude and metal prices lifted commodities producers and banks extended their rally.

This week's gains pushed the S&P 500 to the highest level since Jan. 14. The benchmark for U.S. equities has climbed 9.8 percent from a 19-month low on March 10, paring its 2008 loss to 4.8 percent. The index has gained 5.7 percent so far in April, poised for its first monthly gain since October. The Dow average rose 0.3 percent this week to the highest since Jan. 3, while the Nasdaq climbed 0.8 percent.