

Investing in Santa Barbara

As stock market rebounds, financial firms target region

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The finance world is still holding its head as it recovers from near-collapse, but you wouldn't think so in Santa Barbara. Two financial firms — Crowell Weedon & Co. and Partnervest — are expanding their reach and services in the city, with one opening a local branch and another launching a nationwide investment platform.

Partnervest Financial Group, a Santa Barbara-based firm, is launching a targeted-return investment platform aimed at rebuilding battered portfolios.

Partnervest was founded in Santa Barbara in 2001 as an asset management firm and now has about \$300 million assets under management.

The firm already specializes in managing for risk, President and Chief Executive Officer Ken Hyman said.

The new platform, called STAR, attempts to capitalize on volatility.

Through a combination of diverse asset allocations and exchange-traded funds, it enjoys price ap-

preciation while at the same time harnessing volatility through an option-writing strategy, Hyman said.

The investments are overlaid with a covered call option with a targeted return.

“It's designed to participate in the growth of the underlying assets, and manages for down-side risk,” Hyman said.

The platform, which is already being used in-house at the firm, is now being launched to a select group of representatives at 150 banks and credit unions.

Hyman said a few other broker-dealer firms have also shown strong interest in adopting the platform.

The launch is timely, he said, because many investors will want to use it to shore up their beat-up portfolios.

“A lot of investors are still sitting on the sidelines. They see the Dow go up, but they don't know when it's truly safe to get back in,” he said. “I expect we're going to see more demand from investors and other firms who want to manage risk.”



President and Chief Executive Officer Ken Hyman