

Specialists Thomas Bishop, left, and Michael Pistillo work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Stocks edged higher after more signs the U.S. economic recovery is advancing. AP

US indexes rise on strong retail results

Trader vacations help keep volumes low

By Joshua Freed
Associated Press

Stocks resembled summer vacationers Friday, rising not-too-impressively in the morning and then mostly lying around for the rest of the day.

Positive news from retailers was the main reason U.S. indexes posted small gains. Apple helped too by hitting a new high.

Traders in the U.S. and Europe are on vacation, so volumes were low.

And the dog days continued for Facebook. A 4 percent decline left it shares at about half the price of its May initial public offering.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 25.09 points to close at 13,275.20. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 2.65 points to close at 1,418.16. The Nasdaq rose 14.20 points to close at 3,076.59.

The modest gains put some indexes close to their highs for the year. The Dow is now within four points of 13,279, its high for the year set May 1. The S&P 500 is within one point of its four-year high set April 1.

The Dow has now risen eight out of the last 11 days and finished the week up a half-percent. It is sporting a gain for the year of almost 8.7 percent for the year, while the S&P 500 is up almost 12.7 percent.

Next week is likely to be more eventful. Investors will get Chinese housing reports, minutes from a closely watched Federal Reserve meeting, and jobless claims.

And Europe's problems, which were mostly off center stage in recent days, will return front-and-center as German Chancellor Angela Merkel meets in Berlin with Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras to talk about progress in overcoming Greece's debt crisis.

"Next week, you have somebody say something that no one expects, in thin trading it could really move markets around," said John Canally, investment strategist at LPL Financial.

Global markets edged higher after German Chancellor Angela Merkel gave a new pledge of support for the euro.

On Thursday, she said that "we feel committed to do everything we can to maintain the common currency."