



## 3Q 2022 Commentary

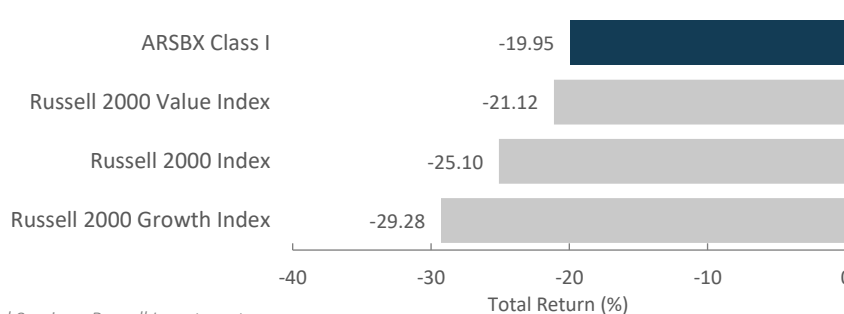
### Markets Review

Small cap equities searched for direction in the third quarter as volatility to upside and downside continued to test investors' fortitude. What looked like a relatively rosy market backdrop through the first half of the quarter with the Russell 2000 Index up over 18%, turned sour in the middle of August, only to worsen further in September, pushing the index into negative territory by quarter-end. Equity market intra-quarter declines coincided with the Federal Reserve (Fed) reiterating that they would prioritize reining in inflation versus supporting growth. To that end, the quarter saw two more aggressive interest-rate hikes of 0.75 percentage points, one in July and then another in September, which leaves the effective federal-funds rate at 3.00%-3.25% exiting the third quarter, its highest level since 2008. Prior to raising the fed-funds rate by three-quarters of a point in June, the Fed had not raised its flagship policy rate by 0.75 percentage points in any single meeting since 1994. These actions led to a sharp rise in bond yields and a risk-off environment that extended to equity markets across the globe. Compared to their large cap counterparts, however, small caps held up relatively well during the quarter with the Russell 2000 Index's total return of -2.19%, besting the -4.61% return of the Russell 1000 Index. This snaps a five-quarter underperformance streak, its longest since the six quarters ending in the first quarter of 1999.

At the sector level, nine of the eleven economic sectors in the Russell 2000 Index posted negative returns during the quarter led by Real Estate (-12.59%), Communication Services (-11.03%) and Consumer Staples (-7.89%). Conversely, Health Care (+6.54%), driven by gains in Biotechnology, Energy (+5.70%) and Consumer Discretionary (-1.55%) were the top performing sectors during the quarter. From a fundamental characteristics standpoint, companies with higher betas, lower dividend yields and high short interest ratios outperformed. Unprofitable\* companies within the Russell 2000 Index also outperformed profitable companies during the quarter by 8.18%.

Given the factor leadership outlined above, it may come as no surprise that the Russell 2000 Growth Index (+0.24%) outpaced the Russell 2000 Value Index (-4.61%) during the period. Although the quarter granted a slight reprieve from growth's relative underperformance versus value over the past several quarters, value's dominance over growth in recent periods continues to be reflected in their trailing twelve-month period returns, with the Russell 2000 Value Index returning -21.12% versus -29.28% for the Russell 2000 Growth Index.

### Year-to-Date Returns



Sources: UMB Fund Services; Russell Investments

Performance data quoted here represent past performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Investment return and principal value will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be lower or higher than the performance information quoted. To obtain performance information current to the most recent month-end, please call (844) 274-7868.

\*Based on earnings expectations over the next twelve months.

Source: FactSet



## Performance Review

For the third quarter of 2022, the Aristotle Small Cap Equity Fund (ARSBX) generated a total return of -2.96% at NAV, trailing the -2.19% total return of the Russell 2000 Index. Overall, security selection detracted while sector allocation positively contributed. Security selection within the Health Care, Utilities and Consumer Discretionary sectors were the largest detractors on a relative basis, while selection within Materials, Communication Services and Industrials contributed. From an allocation perspective, the Fund benefited from underweights in Real Estate and Communication Services; however, this was partially offset by an underweight in Energy and an overweight in Industrials.

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Relative Contributors	Relative Detractors
Cross Country Healthcare	Mercury Systems
Acadia Healthcare	PetIQ
Ardmore Shipping	Knowles
WillScot Mobile Mini Holdings	Unitil
ModivCare	Euronet Worldwide

### CONTRIBUTORS

Security selection added the most value within the Materials, Communication Services and Industrials sectors. From an allocation perspective, the Fund benefited from underweights in Real Estate and Communications Services. At the company level, **Cross Country Healthcare** and **Acadia Healthcare** were two of the largest contributors during the quarter.

- **Cross Country Healthcare (CCRN)**, a workforce solutions and healthcare staffing company, appreciated amid a favorable demand and pricing environment along with strengthening investor sentiment following the company's upbeat investor day. We maintain a position, as we believe management's recent investments in technology along with favorable industry supply-demand dynamics have the potential to drive further value for shareholders in periods to come.
- **Acadia Healthcare (ACHC)**, a provider of behavioral health and addiction services to patients in a variety of inpatient and outpatient settings, benefited from continued strong growth tailwinds from the increasing demand for behavioral services. We maintain a position, as we believe the company is well-positioned to capitalize on the favorable supply/demand outlook for behavioral health, positive reimbursement trends and continued execution of its growth strategy.

### DETRACTORS

Security selection detracted within the Health Care, Utilities and Consumer Discretionary sectors. From an allocation perspective, the Fund's underweight in Energy and overweight in Industrials detracted from relative performance. Additionally, the Fund's orientation towards higher quality companies and avoidance of speculatively valued/money-losing businesses also detracted. At the company level, **Mercury Systems** and **PetIQ** were two of the largest detractors during the quarter.

- **Mercury Systems (MRCY)**, a provider of secure sensor and safety-critical processing subsystems for the aerospace and defense markets, declined in the face of supply chain constraints and defense budget delays despite seeing high levels of new bookings activity, design wins and a robust backlog. We maintain a position, as we believe the company is well-



positioned to capitalize on continued outsourcing of subsystem development, strong mergers and acquisitions opportunities and continued technological innovation.

- **PetiQ (PETQ)**, a holding company that engages in the manufacturing, procurement, packaging and distribution of pet health and wellness, declined amid a soft start to flea and tick season along with near-term inflationary pressures. We maintain our position as we believe the company is well-positioned to benefit from secular demand tailwinds for pet health products. Additionally, we believe management’s focus on increased penetration for its wellness clinics has the potential to create additional value for shareholders.

## Recent Fund Activity

Buys/Acquisitions	Sells/Liquidations
None	Huntington Bancshares

### BUYS/ ACQUISITIONS

- **None**

### SELLS/LIQUIDATIONS

- **Huntington Bancshares (HBAN)**, an Ohio-based bank holding company, was removed from the Fund based on our belief that shares were fully valued and there were better opportunities to deploy capital elsewhere within the Fund.

## Outlook and Positioning

The risks to U.S. economic activity and thus the equity market overall, continue to be the same culprits that have been responsible for the market’s volatility over the past several quarters: the speed and pace of interest rate hikes, supply chain issues, currency and commodity price swings, and geopolitical turmoil across the globe. The subsequent impact of these factors, among others, has resulted in a 25.10% decline in the Russell 2000 Index through the first nine months of the year.

The question at this point is less about what has happened over the past twelve months but more importantly about where we are headed for the remainder of the year and into 2023. As we have indicated many times over the years, our ability to call the direction and magnitude of the market’s moves over the short term is no better (or worse) than anyone else’s. Therefore, we do not attempt to do so. Rather, we continue to monitor events as they unfold and factor those developments into our company-specific and portfolio-specific analyses. Overall, we remain encouraged by the fact that our conversations with hundreds of small cap companies so far in 2022 point to a relatively “stable” environment for their businesses. Companies are reporting a wide array of operating conditions for their business, from reasonably robust to continued sluggishness, but the general consensus in recent meetings is that conditions have not experienced a sudden and rapid deterioration. That is not to say that such a turn of events could not happen before the end of the year; rather, it is just meant to highlight the divergence between the market’s action and what we hear from small cap companies. With quarterly earnings season set to take center stage, we will see if their collective tones have changed or if it will be more of the same.

Another positive note stems from current valuations of small cap companies. Small cap equities continue to remain attractive on a forward valuation basis, both on an absolute level and relative to large caps. As of quarter-end, the relative forward P/E of the Russell 2000 Index versus the Russell 1000 Index continues to trade at a discount to its long-term average and now sits at its cheapest levels since the Dot-com bubble. For long-term investors, these valuations may imply a more favorable setup for small caps relative to large caps in the periods to come. The strengthening of the U.S. dollar may also have an outsized impact on third quarter earnings. In particular, large multinational companies may see a headwind as sizable chunks of their sales come from outside the U.S. That is because as the value of the dollar rises, it makes U.S.-produced goods more expensive outside the country. Continued strength in the U.S. dollar coupled with ongoing geopolitical turmoil and reshoring efforts may offer a relative boost to small caps versus large caps moving forward.



Nevertheless, with uncertainty, volatility and investor pessimism enduring, we believe these environments reinforce the need for selectivity and further argue for a focus on companies with quality characteristics, particularly strong balance sheets and healthy profitability to offer a buffer if economic conditions continue to slow. As always, our current positioning is a function of our bottom-up security selection process and our ability to identify what we view as attractive investment candidates, regardless of economic sector definitions. Recent purchases and sales have been spread across industries and are idiosyncratic in nature, as opposed to being tied to an outlook for a particular sector. Overweights in Industrials and Information Technology are mostly a function of recent Fund activity and the relative performance of our holdings in these sectors over the past few periods. Conversely, we continue to be underweight in Consumer Discretionary, as we have been unable to identify what we consider to be compelling long-term opportunities that fit our discipline given the rising risk profiles as a result of structural headwinds for various brick and mortar businesses. We also continue to be underweight in Real Estate as a result of valuations and structural challenges for various end markets within the sector. Given our focus on long-term business fundamentals, patient investment approach and low portfolio turnover, the Fund's sector positioning generally does not change significantly from quarter to quarter; however, we may take advantage of periods of volatility by adding selectively to certain companies when appropriate.



## Aristotle Small Cap Equity Fund (Class I)

All Periods Ended September 30, 2022

Total Return	3Q22	YTD	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	Since Inception (10/30/15)	Gross / Net Expense Ratio
ARSBX Class I	-2.96	-19.95	-15.91	3.59	2.40	6.10	1.00% / 0.90%
Russell 2000 Index	-2.19	-25.10	-23.50	4.28	3.55	6.75	N/A

*Performance results for periods greater than one year have been annualized.*

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**The Fund's advisor has contractually agreed to waive certain fees and/or absorb expenses, through April 30, 2023, to the extent that the total annual operating expenses do not exceed 0.90% of average daily net assets of the Fund. The Fund's advisor may seek reimbursement from the Fund for waived fees and/or expenses paid for three years from the date of the waiver or payment. Without these reductions, the Fund's performance would have been lower. A redemption fee of 1.00% will be imposed on redemptions of shares within 30 days of purchase.**

### Important Information:

There can be no guarantee that any strategy (risk management or otherwise) will be successful. All investing involves risk, including potential loss of principal.

The views in this letter were as of the date stated and may not necessarily reflect the same views on the date this letter is first published or any time thereafter. These views are intended to help shareholders in understanding the Fund's investment methodology and do not constitute investment advice.

Past performance is not indicative of future results. You should not assume that any of the securities transactions, sectors or holdings discussed in this report are or will be profitable, or that recommendations Aristotle Boston makes in the future will be profitable or equal the performance of the securities listed in this report. There is no assurance that any securities, sectors or industries discussed herein will be included in or excluded from the Fund. The opinions expressed are as of the date of publication and are subject to change due to changes in the market or economic conditions and may not necessarily come to pass. Aristotle Boston reserves the right to modify its current investment strategies and techniques based on changing market dynamics or client needs. This is not a recommendation to buy or sell a particular security. Holdings made in the last 12 months are available upon request.

An investment in the Fund is subject to risks, and you could lose money on your investment in the Fund. The principal risks of investing in the Fund include, but are not limited to, market risk, equity risk, small-cap company risk, sector focus risk, COVID-19 related market events risk, real estate investment trusts (REITs) risk, value-oriented investment strategies risk, foreign investment risk, management and strategy risk, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) risk and cybersecurity risk.

### Definitions:

- The Russell 2000® Index measures the performance of the small cap segment of the U.S. equity universe. The Russell 2000 Index is a subset of the Russell 3000® Index representing approximately 10% of the total market capitalization of that Index. It includes approximately 2000 of the smallest securities based on a combination of their market cap and current index membership.
- The Russell 2000 Growth® Index measures the performance of the small cap companies located in the United States that also exhibit a growth probability.
- The Russell 2000 Value® Index measures the performance of the small cap companies located in the United States that also exhibit a value probability.
- The Russell 1000® Index measures the performance of the large cap segment of the U.S. equity universe. The Russell 1000 Index is a subset of the Russell 3000® Index, representing approximately 90% of the total market capitalization of that index. It includes approximately 1,000 of the largest securities based on a combination of their market capitalization and current index membership.
- Beta is used to measure market risk. It is defined as the average relationship, over time, of the portfolio's rate of return to the style index.
- Forward price-to earnings (P/E) is a version of the price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio that uses forecasted earnings for the P/E calculation.

The volatility (beta) of the Fund may be greater or less than that of the benchmark. An investor cannot invest directly in these indices. Portfolio composition will change due to ongoing management of the Fund. References to specific securities or sectors should not be construed as recommendations by the Fund, its Advisor or Distributor.

As of September 30, 2022, the ten largest holdings in the Fund and their weights as a percent of total net assets exclusive of cash were: Acadia Healthcare, 2.84%; Dycom Industries, 2.43%; Cross Country Healthcare, 2.22%; Huron Consulting Group, 2.21%; Merit Medical Systems, 2.15%; ASGN, 1.86%; National Bank Holdings, 1.69%; ModivCare, 1.63%; MACOM Technology Solutions, 1.59% and Albany International, 1.58%.



**Please consider the Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses carefully before investing. The prospectus or summary prospectus that contains this and other information about the Fund is available by calling (844) 274-7868, or by visiting [www.aristotlefunds.com](http://www.aristotlefunds.com), and should be read carefully prior to investing.**

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