



## **Ross Stores Reports December Same Store Sales Up 4% and Forecasts Estimated Fourth Quarter and Fiscal 2003 EPS**

January 8, 2004

NEWARK, Calif., Jan. 8 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Ross Stores, Inc. (Nasdaq: ROST) today reported that sales grew 14% to \$513 million for the five weeks ended January 3, 2004. These results were on top of an 18% increase for the five weeks ended January 4, 2003, when sales totaled \$452 million. December comparable store sales grew 4% in 2003 on top of a solid 6% gain in the prior year period.

For the 48 weeks ended January 3, 2004, sales rose 11% to \$3.699 billion. These results were on top of a 19% gain for the 48 weeks ended January 4, 2003, when sales totaled \$3.335 billion. Comparable store sales for the same year-to-date period grew 1% on top of an 8% increase in the prior year period.

In commenting, Michael Balmuth, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, said, "We are pleased to report that sales in December performed ahead of our expectations, generating healthy gross profit margins. Geographic and merchandise strength during the month was broadbased. The strongest regions were the southeast and Texas, while the top-performing departments were juniors and the home categories."

Mr. Balmuth continued, "Based on recent sales and margin trends, and assuming that January same store sales increase 4% to 5% as previously planned, we now estimate that earnings per share for the 13 weeks ending January 31, 2004 will be approximately \$.44 to \$.45. These forecasted results represent an increase of 19% to 22% over the \$.37 in earnings per share for the 13 weeks ended February 1, 2003. We also estimate that earnings per share for the 52 weeks ending January 31, 2004 will be approximately \$1.43 to \$1.44, for a forecasted gain of about 14% over the \$1.26 in earnings per share for the 52 weeks ended February 1, 2003. We expect to report final fourth quarter and fiscal 2003 results on Tuesday, March 16, 2004."

The aforementioned forecasted and historical earnings per share information reflects the effect of the Company's recent two-for-one stock split effected in the form of a 100% stock dividend issued on December 18, 2003.

**Forward-Looking Statements:** This press release contains certain forward-looking statements regarding expected sales and earnings, which are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause the Company's actual results to differ materially from management's current expectations. The words "expect," "anticipate," "estimate," "believe," "forecast," "project" and similar expressions identify forward-looking statements. Risk factors include obtaining acceptable new store locations, competitive pressures in the apparel industry, changes in geopolitical and general economic conditions, changes in the level of consumer spending on or preferences in apparel or home-related merchandise and the Company's ability to successfully implement various new supply chain and merchandising systems in a timely and cost effective manner. Other risk factors are detailed in the Company's Form 10-K for fiscal 2002. The factors underlying our forecasts are dynamic and subject to change. As a result, our forecasts speak only as of the date they are given and do not necessarily reflect the Company's outlook at any other point in time. The Company does not undertake to update or revise these forward-looking statements.

Additional recorded information concerning today's press release and the Company's future outlook can be accessed by calling 402-220-5900, PIN #2363, from 8:30 a.m. eastern time on January 8, 2004 through 8:00 p.m. eastern time on January 9, 2004. A transcript of these comments also will be made available on the press release page of the Company's web site at [www.rossstores.com](http://www.rossstores.com).

Ross Stores, Inc. operates a chain of off-price retail stores offering first quality, in-season, branded apparel and apparel-related merchandise for the entire family at prices that average 20% to 60% less than department and specialty stores, as well as merchandise for the home at similar savings. The Company had 573 stores at January 3, 2004, compared to 510 stores at the end of the same period last year.

SOURCE Ross Stores, Inc.

CONTACT: John G. Call, Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer, +1-510-505-4315, or Katie Loughnot, Vice President, Investor Relations, +1-510-505-4509, or [katie.loughnot@ros.com](mailto:katie.loughnot@ros.com), both of Ross Stores, Inc./