

Words to the 403(b) Wise

It didn't take long for Scott Dauenhauer and Dan Otter to read the writing on the wall. In the summer of 2001, Dauenhauer, a fee-only certified financial planner, was trying to make sense of some dubious 403(b) retirement-plan choices offered to his wife, Shauna, a junior high science teacher in Orange County, Calif.'s Newport-Mesa Unified School District. Lobbying the district to make changes and researching a book on the subject, he came upon a resourceful website,

live within 30 minutes of each other sealed the deal.

The result: *The 403(b) Wise Guide*, a quick-readin', straight-shootin' 71-page how-to that takes aim at plan providers who hide high fees and trap doors in their fine print, along with the school districts that, often unknowingly, enable them. "We'd both noticed a lot of abuses in the 403(b) market . . . things like deceptive sales practices, poor products, 15-year contracts saddled with 15% surrender charges," says Dauenhauer. "We wanted to write a book that's simple to understand and gives teachers the background knowledge to empower them to make sound decisions. And, keep it short so they'd read it."

Indeed, Otter, a onetime journalist who taught elementary school for eight years, calls *The 403(b) Wise Guide*, now in its second edition, "the book I wish I would have had my first day at school."

Reaction to the self-published guide has been uniformly positive, including a personal note from John Bogle, the legendary value investor and Vanguard founder. For its part, TIAA-CREF, a cosponsor of 403bwise.com,

was so impressed it ordered a special printing of 5,000 copies, which it gives to K-12 educators at association meetings, benefits fairs and other

events. "We wrote the book with a philosophy in mind that happens to be similar to TIAA-CREF's," Dauenhauer says. "[Their reaction] was almost like getting a third-party endorsement." He

adds that the only ones who don't seem to admire the book are — surprise — the very kind of high-cost 403(b) providers he and Otter assail.

"We wanted to write a book that empowers teachers to make sound decisions. And, keep it short so they'd read it."

By now the duo had hoped to be at work on a similar book, on 457 plans. But President Bush's recent retirement-savings proposals, which would eliminate 457s and 403(b)s alike, have left that project up in the air. So for now they're planning an audio CD version of *The 403(b) Wise Guide*, and writing a general financial planning guide for teachers and other non-profit workers. Our suggested title: *Wise Guys Finish First.*™

To order a copy of *The 403(b) Wise Guide*, visit www.403bwise.com or www.403bretire.com.



Otter and Dauenhauer's self-published *Guide* sheds needed light (and lightheartedness) on a dense financial subject.

www.403bwise.com. Dauenhauer e-mailed Otter, the site's co-creator and a leading advocate for 403(b) investors, and learned that he, too, was planning a 403(b) book. That they happened to