

Vining Sparks is nationally and globally recognized as a leading broker/dealer in serving the needs of institutional investors.

For more information on Vining Sparks, call 800-829-0321.



**THE FIRM WAS** originally founded by Jim Vining to serve the investment and asset/liability needs of community banks. From an initial staff of 17 people, Vining Sparks has significantly expanded its national and worldwide footprint. It now employs more than 300 people in various domestic offices and Europe. The firm's diverse customer base totals approximately 4,400 institutional investors and includes banks, savings and loans, credit unions, municipalities, money managers, trust departments, insurance companies, pension funds, and investment advisors. Vining Sparks has close to \$50 million in capital and an annual trading volume exceeding \$250 billion with customers located in all 50 states and many foreign countries.

Customers of Vining Sparks receive access to proprietary analytical tools that assist them in the investment portfolio decision-making process. The goal of these tools is to assist clients of all types in making decisions that are appropriate based on the client's specific investment objectives. This assistance is available either online or through access with an investment professional. Vining Sparks has invested heavily in online tools so that their sophisticated client base can

access their own holdings at any time and perform analytics over the internet. For customers needing personalized investment advice or assistance, the firm employs specialized professionals from varied backgrounds such as certified public accountants, chartered financial analysts, former Wall Street professionals and investment officers, as well as experts in other industries.

The firm has developed an in-house computer system that continually monitors all customer portfolios. This real-time system is able to alert customers to any number of situations that they need to be aware of. Examples include bonds that have been called, bonds with timely news updates, and other strategy-related issues. Vining Sparks is very active in providing investment education to its current and prospective customer base. Each year, the firm holds dozens of seminars in various locations across the country.

In addition to the assistance provided through proprietary analytics and education, the Vining Sparks trading desk carries its own inventory of a wide variety of fixed income securities. This inventory includes, but is not limited to, the following: government agency

securities, mortgage-backed and CMO securities, corporate bonds, municipal bonds, and Small Business Administration securities. Additionally, the firm's trading desk electronically captures and analyzes other firms' holdings which allows its customers a broadened view of offerings available in the fixed-income universe. Vining Sparks can also structure and bring new securities to market for agencies of the U.S. government. By being able to tailor these securities to customers' needs, the firm is consistently ranked as one of the country's top 20 underwriters of newly issued agency debt.

Vining Sparks holds a minority ownership of Howe Barnes Investments Inc., an investment banking firm based in Chicago, Illinois. Through Howe Barnes, Vining Sparks is able to offer its financial institution customers a broad range of capital markets services. These services include corporate finance, market-making activities, and equity research.

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