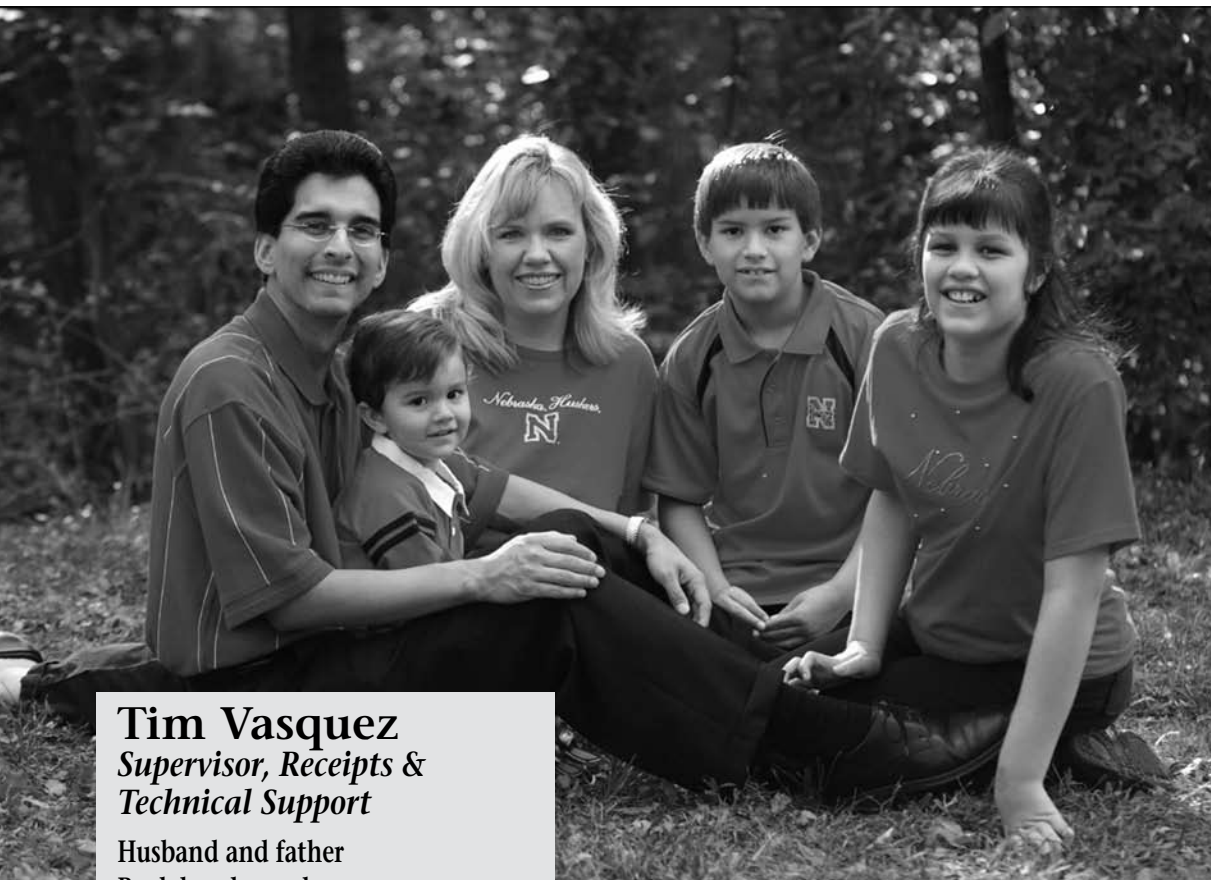


INTERVIEW



Tim Vasquez *Supervisor, Receipts & Technical Support*

Husband and father
Rock band member
Church musician/liturgist
Religious education teacher
Rollerskating instructor
Writer

Tim Vasquez packs more into a week than most people.

The high-energy, extremely disciplined employee has worked as supervisor, Receipts and Technical Support in Finance, for 10 years, having joined OPPD 13 years ago. The job requires strong accounting and technical skills and the ability to analyze figures and data within OPPD's complex business operations.

Though he's definitely got the traits of an accountant, there's much more to him.

Tim attends a daily Latin mass, teaches rollerskating on Saturday mornings, and

arts obviously molded him early on.

Tim gave up sweets as a preteen, and he's been a vegetarian for 17 years. That's also how long he has gone without caffeine or sugar-based drinks, opting simply for water.

"I am full of positive energy," said Tim, who's always sporting a smile. "I wonder where people get energy without things like music and religion. And, I can't imagine what caffeine would do to me since I'm crazy enough on stage as it is.

"My goal is to have the work ethic of my dad, who was a physician, and the passion of being involved with my family, like my mom," said Tim.

A native of Omaha, Tim recently shared more of his background, as well as other insights.

Tell us about your background and why you chose the accounting field.

I joined musical theater in high school, but actually considered dropping out of high school as a junior. I headed to the Tisch School of the Arts, an affiliate of New York University, to act. That lasted two semesters, I realized that I wasn't cut out for it. Everyone there was more talented than I was, but no one was working as an actor. So I made this plan to go to Minnesota for college, where I could earn my Equity card at a local theater company, which would allow me to audition for acting work in New York. After awhile though, I dropped out of acting and came back to UNO, where I had taken some

The Vasquez family: Tim, Tommy, Julie, Andy and Emily.

sings and plays piano at his church on weekends. He teaches a religious education class on Wednesday nights, and he's written a series of Bible-related stories with modern-day twists to keep the kids' interest. He tests them out on his three kids: Emily, 12; Andy, 9; and Tommy, 2. He and his wife of 13 years, Julie, also have the challenge of caring for a special-needs child, as their daughter has severe autism.

Oh, and then there's the rock band. Tim's a member of one of the Midwest's most popular rock 'n' roll cover bands – The Rumbles – that plays over one hundred gigs a year.

How does he fit all of that in?

Tim credits his supportive wife and his lifestyle of spirituality, music and a pure diet. And, childhood influences from his parents, a particular priest and martial

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classes during high school. I decided to go into accounting. I joke that it was the next listing in the course catalog next to “acting.” I didn’t have the guts or gumption to read through the rest of the book.

You got through college pretty fast.

I enrolled at UNO in 1992 and graduated in 1993. I had 40 credit hours from Minnesota, and I took all four summer sessions both years at UNO. I did slam it all in, but I felt like I had to, in order to actually finish.

How has having a special-needs child changed your life?

Special needs children have taught me that I need to work on my patience. Every day is a new challenge or frustration. When we found out Emily was autistic, we decided not to have any more children because we didn’t know if we could handle it. That was devastating because we only had two and we wanted to have many kids. But we stopped while we watched our lives with Emily unfold.

In the meantime, we had so much fun with our second child that we made the difficult decision to bring another child into our lives. It has been extremely difficult since then, trying to care for a young one while still taking care of the regular needs of a special-needs child who is 12 and still needs much attention (diapering, bathing, feeding, etc.).

I was given a poem called “Welcome To Holland,” which many special needs parents exchange during their lives. It basically tells of a person who prepared her whole life to go to Italy, but when she finally gets there, the stewardess tells her, “Welcome to Holland.” The lady is mortified that there must have been some mistake because she signed up for Italy. But she finds herself in Holland, and there she must stay. All her friends tell her what a great place Italy is, but if she dwells on it, she’ll miss the nice

things that Holland has to offer.

I know Emily will be a child we have to take care of for the rest of her life, as long as we live. We just try to make her comfortable and pray for a miracle. I’d like to believe they’ll find a cause and cure for autism, but the reality is that Emily is too old for most of the work being done in the

parents talk about the sporting events they were involved in. At the time it made me wish those parents could have seen what I saw at that center. I wanted them to realize how fortunate they were to have a child who developed normally.



The Rumbles, from left, Gayle Adams, Tim Vasquez, Steve Hough and Todd Henseler, keep the crowds entertained.

field, which focuses on early development.

What do you wish those without special-needs family members could know?

I visited a respite care center where we were going to place Emily at a time when our second child, Andy, needed some additional help. I was so taken back by what I saw there. The children who were there had so many unique and terrible illnesses that I wanted to run away. It was so depressing. Yet, there I was, enrolling my child, who had a unique and terrible illness, too.

Afterwards, I took my kids to the park and just sat there, stunned. I watched all of the normally developing children running and, playing while listening to

What does music add to your life?

Music is the song inside of me that gives me energy. It’s hard to stay down or negative when humming a goofy song from the ‘80s. I like to quote music regularly, just to see if anyone’s paying attention. My favorite board game is called “Encore.” You get a word and have to find a song that has that word in it within a minute. You sing the line from the song and kick it back to the other team. I love that kind of stuff.

There was a period of about three years between college and becoming a liturgist at St. Robert’s that I wasn’t doing any music regularly. I was surprised that I missed it as much as I did. My favorite type of music is the duet, where two voices can



Tim teaches rollerskating lessons, and here shows "how low he can go" on skates.

chase each other around the scale. When I was in high school and college, I had always had a duet partner who would be willing to sing any song with me. We would sing like crazy! That's what I missed the most during those three years: making music with someone.

How did you get hooked up with the Rumbles?

I didn't exactly set out looking for a band to join. I certainly had enough work at that time that I would never have believed I would've had time for such a thing. But in June 2002, I received an email from a friend of mine from a church band. It basically said "a friend of mine is the guitarist for the Rumbles. They are looking for a keyboardist/guitarist/singer, if you are interested in yet another steady gig."

I'd never heard of the Rumbles, so immediately I began thinking garage band and endless rehearsals, and I decided I would just ignore the message. Three days later, I received an email from the Rumbles, asking me to check out their website. Impressed by the fact that they had a website, I printed out their song list, schedule and replied, noting my limitations and hoping they weren't interested. Three minutes later, my phone rang, and they were asking me for an audition tape.

I wasn't interested in something that

was going to take me away from family with no gain, and neither was my wife. We had some long discussions about this.

But the first time I watched them, I suddenly decided I wanted to be a part of the group! There was so much energy on stage, and I enjoyed watching the crowd.

I was watching Jim Lippincott, the guy I was auditioning to replace, who

was sick with cancer. I thought there was no human way I was ever going to make this group because he was so good. But the more I watched the guys interacting, the more I wanted to be a part of the group. Jim's disease progressed more quickly than they expected, and due to some awful timing, by August, I was in my first show with the Rumbles, having never even practiced with them!

You had never heard of the Rumbles?

I guess I lived a pretty sheltered life. When I told people that I was auditioning for the Rumbles, I kept getting replies like, "The Rumbles? I LOVE the Rumbles!". It seemed so hard to believe that so many people knew the group.

Tim dons a tall, pink hairpiece while singing Love Shack. Tim refers to himself as "the lady" of the band since he sings the high parts.

What's your role with the Rumbles?

I play keyboard, guitar and harmonica, and I sing lead and backup vocals. The other members are drummer Steve Hough (original to the band since its start-up 44 years ago), guitarist Gayle Adams and bassist Todd Henseler. The shows are regular and consistent, and I can count on few rehearsals. We do a lot of traveling around the Midwest, though, so our van time is important time to me. Two years ago, I bought a laptop to take on the van so that I could do things like write books and study scripture. That's made the summer tours more enjoyable for me.

What qualified you for the Rumbles?

After watching their initial performance, I didn't feel that I was qualified. I spent a lot of time listening to a tape they made for me of Jim performing. Before I was officially in, there were several days where my head was spinning. I was discouraged, but determined, and I practiced from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. They seemed to have confidence in me. I had

been performing musically all of my life:

in the Messiah, in the Omaha Symphony holiday concerts and at several local Catholic churches as music director, singer and musician, but had never been in a band. It was quite a transition.

With all your talent, what is the best compliment you ever received?

It came from a neighbor, whose daughter is always at my house. We have the "fun house" on the block, where several kids come play each day. She told me that I was the busiest guy she knew, but that I played with my kids more than anyone she'd seen. That's what I'm shooting for.

By Paula Lukowski

