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# XENOGENY

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Cover Photo by Mikko Robinson

## PFLAG's H.G. Stovall & His Mom

Discuss working together with PFLAG & coming out, in honor of Mother's Day!

## In Honor of Mother's Day, PFLAG's HG Stovall shares his coming out story

by Joseph Brant

"I never thought you were gay," HG Stovall's mother once told him.

"...maybe Elton John. But not you."

Quotes like that one aside, the coming out of HG to his parents mirrored the experience for many of us.

"I out-ed myself to my parents on our sofa in the family room one afternoon," he says. "I was still in school at MTSU and as was our custom, once a week Mom and I had been to lunch with Dad and when we got back to their house Mom realized that something was bothering me and asked about it."

His parents had inquired earlier as to the whereabouts of a friend of HG's. At that point, the whole truth was about to be revealed.

"I was sobbing hysterically," he recalls, "and could barely breathe but a few minutes later I managed to blurt out 'You haven't seen David because we broke up, Mom I'm gay.'"

"At this point Mom was already hugging me very tightly and just told me 'it is okay'" he says. "She assured me they love me and not to worry about it and we had a wonderful afternoon, now that some of the pressure had been relieved."

"My parents and I have most always been very close," he adds.

HG is now the non-parent co-chair of the Nashville chapter of PFLAG, the national non-profit Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays that promotes the health of GLBT persons, their friends and family by offering personal support, diversity education and political advocacy.

"In our local chapter, we tend to lean a little more on the support side," he says.

"I honestly didn't even know PFLAG existed," says HG, "until I began watching 'Queer As Folk.'" A friend had mentioned the organization but, according to HG, his student schedule didn't allow for it. On the night that Fred Phelps visited Nashville during the Nashville metro employment ordinance circus of 2003, HG chose to attend his first meeting of PFLAG.

"From the beginning there was love, compassion and welcoming," he says. "I always tell people who call or e-mail that when they come to their first meeting that the only thing I can guarantee is love. Sometimes there are more people than others, and sometimes the

coffee is better but there is always love and acceptance in the room."

PFLAG-Nashville has been very busy lately. On April 1 & 2 they attended the Tennessee/



Kentucky bi-state conference which boasted nearly 50 members from Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina and South Carolina. It was attended by PFLAG's newly minted national Executive Director Jody Huckaby.

Nationally, PFLAG started a media effort in January of this year called "Stay Close." The goal is to reach people

who would most benefit from PFLAG's services – parents, friends and family – to increase acceptance, reduce bigotry, and change hearts and minds. I mention to HG the possibility of bringing some of Nashville's celebrities (and their gay kin) into this national campaign. (Well ... I mentioned Dolly specifically.)

"I was not aware of Dolly's relation," GH says. "I would like for this to happen, but the high cost of advertising has been a harsh reality since I took over as co-chair." All of the celebrities involved (and their gay kin) can be found on the website, [stayclose.org](http://stayclose.org).

Though this may all be boilerplate for HG, I ask him all the knee-jerk questions any one of us would ask:

**Q:** What advice do you have for someone who hasn't come out yet to family?

**A:** Know that it's probably not going to be as bad as they think it might be. My father has always said "it is rare that your worst fears come true."

**Q:** What about someone who's come out and isn't accepted by his or her family?

**A:** They will probably come around. It's important to let them deal with it slowly. Be patient. It's hard for a parent to go through that process, even if they think they're okay with it. "Coming Out To Parents" by Mary Borhek (Pilgrim Press, \$16.00) is a very good book.

**Q:** What would you say to the parent of someone who's gay?

**A:** It will get easier. We've had people come to PFLAG and not understand how happy some of the parents are. It gets better, it takes a little while. The first step is to love your child and the rest will come with time. My mom always says "there's nothing that is going to come between me and my baby," and she's right. Don't let your children grow up to be unloved ... no matter what.