

Phil's story:

I grew up in a big family in St. Louis being the youngest of 3 brothers, 1 sister and loving parents in a Catholic faith, with emphasis on school, sports, and work and unfortunately partying at a young age.

I went through puberty finding out I was gay and doing my best to hide it in a straight world and self-medicating the fears and anxieties about it with drugs and alcohol. I could pass as straight which made it harder to be honest with myself and loved ones. Once I finally realized my sexuality as real from much therapy and loving friends, I came out to my parents and family and found out, as my husband of 13 years says, most don't care or have their own lives to worry about.

After many years of hiding my sexuality, I am more free and at peace today once I stood up and confirmed my relationship with my future husband to my family and wouldn't be anywhere without him - he is my family along with our 5 cats (one still living within 30 years), and 4 stray cats. We also have 10 siblings and over 30 nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews, along with aunts and uncles and a surviving mom of 90.

Gay pride is what it takes to understand self-love and the love of family, friends, and community of faith. The Episcopal church came to our wedding and helped us celebrate from 2 priests, 1 deacon and their spouses and son, who stood up as witnesses in Davenport, IA. back in 2009.

I think it holds true, that my being gay isn't a threat to a so called 'straight world', only to not being true to myself and those I love!