



Doreen J. Bouck – Mother of Donor (LGBT Ally) - Since I first ‘came out’ while a sophomore at Adrian College, my mother has been at my side every step of the way - a staunch and steady supporter and Ally. Her expectations following our very first conversation about my being gay were unambiguous: she intended to come to terms with my sexuality, and she expected me to provide her with as much information as I could. In just a few months, she had exceeded any expectations I may have had.

My mother grew up during a time when there was great inequality between the rights and privileges of whites and African-Americans. Though she lived in an all-white town, that differential treatment never made sense to her then; and the ways in which gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people have continued to be treated differently over decades has never made sense to her either.

My mother set the tone in the family early on, and her message was clear: her love for her gay son was unconditional. In her own way, she let the family know that when the day came that I had a '*special friend*' in my life, that person would be as welcome at family gatherings as my siblings' spouses. If that was a problem, they were to feel free to make other plans; that never came to be. In fact, I have been blessed with a wonderfully supportive family. My entire family was eventually informed I was gay: each at a different time, each in a different way, and each with a different reaction.

My mother raised me to be a ‘challenger’. Growing up, I was expected to be able to explain myself, and was challenged to assert myself whenever something just didn’t seem right.

Mom has always welcomed into her life and family the friends who have been important to me. She has picnicked with me at P-FLAG events, watched me perform with the Greater Lansing Gay Men’s Chorus, marched side-by-side with me and with my church at statewide Pride events in Lansing, and accompanied me at many other LGBT functions. She has never been content enough to just hear about my life experiences as a gay person, or about the LGBT community’s struggles. If she does not know or understand something, or if she is even just the least bit curious, she asks. She has been my confidant and #1 cheerleader! She has been, in fact, my ROCK!

Whenever I thinks of my mother, I am reminded of a song with special meaning by Helen Reddy:

***You and me against the world,
Sometimes it's felt like / you and me against the world
When others turn their backs and walk away
I've always known I can count on you to stay***

My mother set a remarkable example for me in her own ‘coming out’ as an LGBT Ally, and has continued doing so my entire life.