



## American Foundation *for* Suicide Prevention

### **2010 Lifesavers Dinner Honors Researchers; HBO, Dana and Hart Perry; Major General Mark, Carol and Melanie Graham**

#### Funds Raised for Suicide Prevention at 22nd Annual Gala Featuring Dorothy Hamill

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[Dana](#) and [Hart Perry](#), along with [HBO Documentary Films](#), received AFSP's Public Education Award for the groundbreaking film *Boy Interrupted*, which tells the story of the Perry's 15-year-old son, Evan, who died by suicide after struggling with bipolar disorder. The film created awareness about suicide and its relationship to mood disorders and has advanced the public's understanding of the impact suicide has on surviving family and friends.

"The thing that was amazing about making this film was the response. I never imagined that it would be educational in any way. All we were trying to do was share our experience," Dana Perry said. "The result was incredible. We received hundreds of letters from people who had been through bipolar illness, or had been through the loss of a loved one to suicide, and they identified with Evan. They were able to see who he was as a whole, not just as a sick person. Evan was as beloved as a person could have ever been. He touched so many people."

"We need to tell our stories without shame and without stigma," she said.

"We've made a number of films over the years at HBO dealing with issues of mental health and suicide, but none has had quite the impact that *Boy Interrupted* has," said Nancy Abraham, senior vice president, HBO Documentary Films. "It clearly has universal themes and has touched millions of people around the world."

"My younger brother died by suicide in 1971, and it was like the dark ages in understanding this phenomenon," Hart Perry said. "I think the research that AFSP is doing is important because this is something that is not understood very well."

[Maj. Gen. Mark Graham](#), his wife [Carol](#) and daughter [Melanie](#) received AFSP's Public Service Award for bringing national attention to the problem of suicide, both in the military and among the civilian population.

Since the tragic loss of their sons, University of Kentucky Senior ROTC Cadet Kevin Graham to suicide, and Army 2nd Lt. Jeffrey Graham to combat in Iraq, the Grahams have been featured on CNN, ABC, in the *Wall Street Journal* and other media outlets, helping to reduce the stigma surrounding the disorders that can lead to suicide and breaking down the barriers that keep those at risk from seeking help.

"I am just a humbled soldier in a humbled soldier's family, serving the nation, and so were my boys -- and they died fighting different battles. Frankly, I'm still not sure how the world continues to spin with them gone," Gen. Graham said.

"Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, General Casey and General Chiarelli, from the top, are leading our Army and our military in suicide prevention and helping us get in front of this," he said. "Breaking down the walls of stigma, this is hard to do. We wish it could move faster and change quicker. But it will take time to do it. These are wounds that you cannot see."

“As a mother, when Kevin took his life, my world ended, I didn’t want to keep on living. And had it not been for some of you in this room that I could call, and I’m so grateful to my family,” Carol Graham said.

“This award is on behalf of our soldiers that are out there on the front lines -- they are just all our boys. Mark and I, we just look at them and they are all Jeffrey and Kevin.”

*The annual Lifesavers Dinner is attended by representatives from the world of politics, science, media, entertainment and business and is dedicated to raising greater public awareness about suicide. The event also provides significant financial support for the AFSP’s research, education and advocacy programs.*

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