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Profile in Courage Award Honors Annan, Koldenhoven and September 11 Heroes

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The Profile in Courage Award, named after President Kennedy's 1957 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, was created in 1989 in remembrance of President Kennedy's commitment and contribution to public service. It is presented annually, on or near May 29, President Kennedy's birthday, "to an elected official who has withstood strong opposition from constituents, powerful interest groups, or adversaries to follow what he or she believes is the right course of action."

On May 6, 2002 at the JFK Library, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, former Palos Heights, Illinois Mayor Dean Koldenhoven, and September 11 heroes were presented the thirteenth John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award.

"A special and unprecedented Profile in Courage Award for Public Service" was awarded to representatives of the New York City fire and police departments and the Army on behalf of "thousands of selfless public servants" who responded to the events of September 11. Senator Edward Kennedy remarked that in the days following September's terrorist attack, public servants demonstrated what President Kennedy meant when he said, "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

Annan received the award in acknowledgement of his leadership of the U.N. in "bringing together diverse countries and political forces to combat terrorism, rebuild a nation and broker peace internationally." In doing so, he risked his standing with world leaders, including the United States. The award also acknowledged his global fight against AIDS, in which he also faces political risks with member nations. Annan stated, "These are not easy choices. But that very fact may make them all the more necessary. It is when leaders find a way to marry necessity and interest, morality and purpose, that true progress is made."

Caroline Kennedy, who presented the award, stated, "President Kennedy felt his greatest admiration for those in politics who had the courage to make decisions of conscience without fear of the consequences. It is this unique kind of courage for which we honor Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Dean Koldenhoven."

The Profile in Courage Award honored Koldenhoven for facing down post-September 11 religious and racial intolerance. When Al Salam Mosque Foundation, a local Islamic group, wished to purchase and convert a local church into a mosque, residents, including city council members, fought the sale with racist and discriminatory insults. When that failed, the city council tried to buy the group with \$200,000. When the group accepted the offer, Koldenhoven vetoed the offer, calling it "an embarrassment." Ultimately Al Salam Mosque Foundation decided to build in a community where they did not feel threatened or unwanted. The price paid for Koldenhoven's politically risky action was his bid for re-election as Mayor of Palos Heights, Illinois.

In accepting the Profile in Courage Award, Koldenhoven stated, "The decision was easy. You don't need to think it over. You know what's wrong, so you know what is right."