

# enVIsion

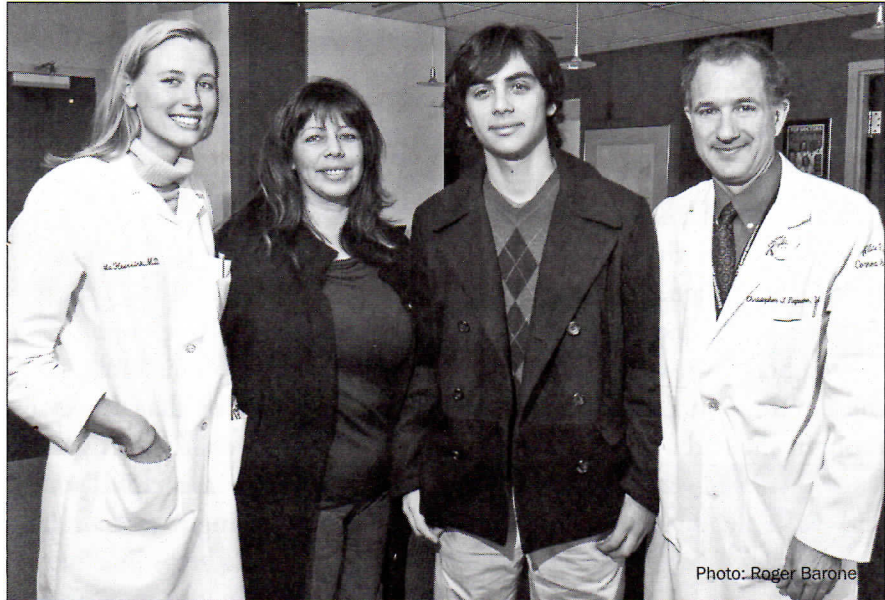
## High Tech Teamwork Yields Amazing Recovery: Teen Injured by Fireworks Heals Thanks to Wills Eye

It was a hot summer day last July, and 17-year-old Ben Spair was hanging around his backyard in New Hope, Pa., playing basketball and jumping on the trampoline with his younger brother. They could hear neighbor kids setting off firecrackers. But the firecrackers sounded kind of small and dinky, and Ben thought he could do better. He had some bigger, louder fireworks of his own. He went into the house and returned with his firecracker: a Double Impact Mine. As Ben knelt down to touch the match to the fuse, the firework exploded in his face. He fell backwards, reeling in pain.

"I knew it was bad, obviously; I couldn't see. It hurt all over my face, burning like crazy," Ben remembered. "I heard screaming. My mother and brother had seen it all happen." They guided him into the house to splash his face with water and try to assess his injuries.

"His eyes were completely white, no iris, no color," his mother, Giuliana, recounted with a shudder. "His eyelids were blackened and all of his hair was blown back. His eyelashes were gone. His eyebrows were singed off."

Doctors say that a fireworks injury to the eyes can be one of the most devastating because it is both a thermal (heat) burn and a chemical burn.



So proud of her son's wonderful recovery, Giuliana Spair (second from left) poses with her son, Ben, and Mila Heersink, M.D. (left) and Christopher Rapuano, M.D. (right).

The family quickly went to Doylestown Hospital for medical treatment. "They put some kind of cool liquid on my face and it felt better, but I still couldn't see," Ben said. "Everything was blurry and gray."

For the next few days, the family consulted a local eye doctor, but Ben's situation was not improving. Then Ben's dad, David, noticed blood coming from his son's eyes.

"We knew Ben needed expert help. We felt we had to see whoever was the best and we knew Wills Eye is the best," David said. The family came to the Wills Eye Emergency Room at Jefferson late on a Saturday night, and immediately the situation improved.

"When I first met Ben, he could barely count fingers held in front of his face," recalled Dr. Mila Heersink, a second-year resident at Wills Eye. "He had a devastating injury. It made me mad, because he was such a young guy. I thought he would have bad vision the rest of his life. It was a terrible feeling."

**"We thank God and the doctors at Wills Eye."**

Dr. Heersink explained that although the eye does have great abilities to heal itself, Ben's injury was so severe that was not possible in his case. He had a lot of scar tissue and swelling. "Left alone, his tissues would have