

SCATTERING CJ



THE LOSS OF ONE BECOMES THE JOURNEY OF MANY



A FILM BY **ANDREA KALIN** AND **SPARK MEDIA**
DOCUMENTARY / 64 MINUTES / 16:9 / STEREO

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DATA SHEET

Scattering CJ

Grieving mom, Hallie Twomey, put a call out on Facebook after losing her elder son CJ to suicide. Her request: To honor her son's memory and love of travel by scattering his ashes in as many amazing places as possible.

The request went viral. A global community formed to scatter CJ's ashes in thousands of locations worldwide, helping Hallie find the peace and courage to become a powerful voice in the fight against the suicide.

Directed by: **Andrea Kalin**

Country of Production: **United States**

Year: **2019**

Genre: **Documentary**

Film Specs: **64 minutes / 16:9 / Stereo / Color**

Language: **English**

Production Company: **Spark Media**

Directed, Written, and Produced by: **Andrea Kalin**

Producer: **David Lobatto**

Composer: **Ceiri Torjussen**

Distribution Company: **Ro*co Films**

SYNOPSIS

Logline (25 words)

When a heartbroken mom asked the world to help honor the memory of her beloved elder son, the loss of one became the journey of many.

Brief Synopsis (75 words)

Grieving mom, Hallie Twomey, put a call out on Facebook after losing her elder son CJ to suicide. Her request: To honor her son's memory and love of travel by scattering his ashes in as many amazing places as possible.

The request went viral. A global community formed to scatter CJ's ashes in thousands of locations worldwide, helping Hallie find the peace and courage to become a powerful voice in the fight against the suicide.

Full Synopsis (200 words)

Scattering CJ is the story of broken-hearted mom Hallie Twomey's mission to do one final, amazing thing for her elder son CJ following his suicide. She put a singular call out to the world on Facebook: a request to honor her son's memory and love of travel by helping scatter his ashes in as many places of beauty and meaning as possible. That call launched an initiative called *Scattering CJ*.



Hallie's request resonated beyond her wildest dreams. It galvanized a global community via social media that would scatter CJ's ashes in thousands of different locations, creating a vast archive of stunning imagery and moving testimony. But it would cause thousands more—many affected by suicide or mental illness—to come together online to support each other and encourage Hallie to become a community leader in the fight to raise awareness and end the silence and stigma that has contributed to escalating rates of suicide year after year.

Employing hundreds of clips chronicling ash-scattering pilgrimages worldwide, combined with intimate interviews and vérité filmmaking, *Scattering CJ* explores the devastating effects of suicide as well as the extraordinary generosity of strangers and one troubled family's attempt to find peace.

Festival Guide Description (100 words)

How do you best celebrate the life of a loved one?

Hallie Twomey lost her elder son CJ to suicide. After years of grief, she was compelled to undertake one last maternal act. Something that commemorated the way he lived, not how his life ended.

Hallie put a call out on Facebook, asking for help in honoring CJ's love of travel by scattering his ashes in amazing places he might have visited had he lived. 21,000 people answered Hallie's call. The initiative became a global phenomenon.

Scattering CJ finds hope in the darkest of places, exploring the extraordinary generosity of strangers and one troubled family's attempt to find peace.

BIOS & DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Andrea Kalin – Director, Producer, Writer

Andrea Kalin is the creative visionary and founder of Spark Media, a production company dedicated to creating stories with a strong social conscience that engage and compel. Her films have aired on major networks around the globe, screened theatrically to sold-out audiences, and earned more than 100 industry awards, including a Prime Time Emmy, Golden Globe and WGA nominations. She takes viewers to the emotional front line where lives of courage, perseverance and dignity transcend seemingly insurmountable hardships.



Scattering CJ, which will be released in September 2019, is her 12th documentary feature. It chronicles the lives of Hallie Twomey and her family, who through outreach on Facebook find comfort following their son CJ's suicide and a platform for greater understanding of suicide and mental health.

Other recent films include: *First Lady of the Revolution*, which won ten awards, including Best Documentary Feature at the Sidewalk, Fairhope and Oxford Film Festivals, aired on public television's REEL South series, screened internationally and was selected to tour the U.S. with the Southern Circuit. *Red Lines*, which was voted a top-20 audience pick at Hot Docs Film Festival, and won Best Documentary Feature at the Woodstock Film Festival, and the Humanitarian Award at the Tiburon International Film Festival. *No Evidence of Disease*, which was released by Regal Cinemas on 47 screens on World Cancer Day, and was broadcast on American Public Television on the World Channel and in Spanish on VME. The film was showcased at high-profile events on Capitol Hill and in 80 community screenings across the U.S. and around the world. Her diverse filmography also includes Smithsonian Channel's *Worlds of Sound* and *Soul of a People: Writing America's Story*; PBS's *Prince Among Slaves*; *Talking Through Walls*; *The Pact*; and theatrical release, *Allah Made me Funny*, starring Mo Amer.

Her debut, *Partners of the Heart*, narrated by Morgan Freeman, was named one of "NEH's 50 Best," aired on PBS' "American Experience," won the Erik Barnouw Award for Best History Documentary; and inspired the award-winning HBO original, *Something the Lord Made*, starring Alan Rickman and Mos Def.

Kalin believes that all her films reflect a common spark: an inspired—and inspiring—impulse to shine a light on the unexpected and to share stories that become a part of who we are and how we see our world.

If you or someone you know is in crisis
call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for 24/7 support
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
www.scatteringcifiilm.com

"CJ's mother, Hallie Twomey, taught me what resilience looks like, about the depths of sadness, and what it means to summon the courage to get up and face the next day amid unrelenting grief.

She trusted us to chronicle her family's story during a period of unimaginable loss and great change, and we never took that trust lightly. Without hesitation, the Twomey family embraced the documentary process, allowing our cameras to become an ever-present part of their lives. We were given access to their day-to-day activities, such as accompanying CJ's younger brother Connor to the welding shop where he works, chatting with CJ's father John early in the morning as he drove to work, and spending countless hours with Hallie at home, as she packed ashes at her dining room table.

What we witnessed was a mother on a mission. And it soon became clear that Hallie's Facebook posts describing her grief and guilt in brutally honest terms had struck a chord that resounded far and wide. In response, she was inundated with heartfelt messages of condolence and thanks, both for sharing her pain and for giving others the strength to do so themselves. The Scattering CJ project took off before our eyes, and soon CJ's ashes were traveling the globe, from that dining room table in Maine to hundreds of destinations the world over.

At the outset of our filming, we asked ourselves if participating in the documentary process would become the lasting testimonial to her son that Hallie so craved. But despite all the good that had been wrought from the tragedy for so many all over the world, would she ever be able to find her own peace?

The questions we posed defied easy answers. They still do.

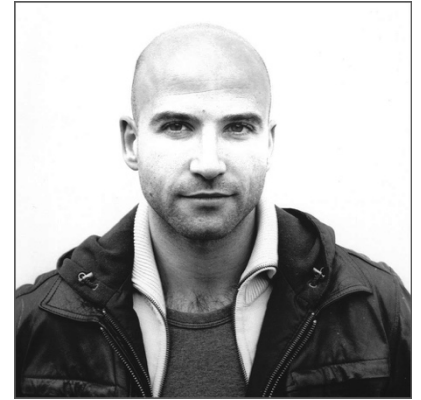
It has been nine years since CJ's death and more than four years since we began our own journey alongside the family. In this time, it has been a privilege to get to know the Twomeys, to meet some of the "scatterers," and even end up working with one named Kelly Vella, an Australian graphic designer. Kelly not only took CJ's ashes to Fiji with an entourage of extended family, but also generously donated her time and talents to a long-distance collaboration resulting in the film's closing graphic that strikingly illuminates the 1,000-plus destinations where CJ has been scattered. Fittingly, like the scattering project itself, the film was also enriched by the kindness and gifts of strangers.

Our dedicated team aimed to make a film that amplifies humanity's innate goodness, adds strength to the purpose of a heartbroken mom and hopefully helps change lives. Ultimately, Scattering CJ might reveal a truth to others that we understand more keenly than before we embarked on this journey that from the darkest loss can emerge the brightest of life."

– Andrea Kalin, September 2019

David Lobatto – Producer

David Lobatto is a British writer, based in LA, with a background in physical production on such films such as *Casino Royale* and *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, rising to the level of production manager. He wrote the BAFTA-nominated single drama *Cyberbully*, that starred Maisie Williams and aired on Channel 4 in 2015 to rave reviews; it also garnered an RTS nomination, two nominations at the Broadcast Awards and won the Mind Media drama award for raising awareness of mental health issues.



More recently, he has been developing a number of projects, including a series based on the origins of the British SAS with director Michael Mann for Big Talk and ITV Studios; a series based on the history of the East India Company (CBS Studios International); a feature for George Clooney & Grant Heslov's Smokehouse Pictures for Sony; and true story feature on the world's first racing team for wounded veterans, *Dakar*, for BBC Films.

He has also been commissioned to write a sci-fi pilot for HULU, adapting original material by Scott Derrickson (*Doctor Strange*) and is working with Colin Callender's Playground Entertainment on adapting a prestigious literary character for the screen. *Scattering CJ* is his first documentary.

He is repped in the USA by CAA and Kaplan/Perrone and in the UK by Casarotto Ramsay & Associates.

"The process of making this film has only reinforced to me a thousand times over that we are all responsible for our state of mental health as a society. To assert that you will never be affected by mental illness, directly or indirectly, throughout your lifetime is like saying you will never catch a cold or cut your finger. The need to eradicate the stigma surrounding depression and suicide is as pressing as it has ever been. It is through the incredible endeavors of people like Hallie Twomey and the prowess and fortitude of activists like Andrea Kalin that shame can be driven out of the subject and the tools to get help for people in need can be most widely and effectively deployed."

– David Lobatto

Ceiri Torjussen – Composer

Ceiri Torjussen is a Welsh-born multi-award winning composer whose credits run the gamut of independent films, documentaries, network television, animation and larger-budget studio films. Ceiri recently completed scoring the feature film *Burn*, a thriller starring Josh Hutcherson and Suki Waterhouse. In 2018, he scored the 4-hour, docuseries *Pistorius* for Amazon, about the paralympic athlete and convicted murderer Oscar Pistorius. Other projects include the award-winning documentaries *Mr. Calzaghe* (BBC/eOne) and *Becoming Bulletproof* (Showtime).



"The challenge of scoring Scattering CJ lie in striking an emotional balance between the tragic backstory and the inspiring present-day story. While it was important to address the pain of such a huge loss, it also was vital to reflect the hope and resilience that Hallie and her family felt, having been supported in their grief by thousands of people worldwide. I hope that my music was able to reveal the emotional heart of this touching film."

– Ceiri Torjussen

THE TWOMEY FAMILY

“John, Hallie and Connor Twomey are a family of three, but not by choice.

They are three-quarters of a family due to the devastating suicide of their son and brother CJ at age 20.

CJ’s suicide, a death that came out of the blue like a vicious tsunami, forced them into a life they were not prepared to live. In the almost decade that has passed since CJ’s death, the Twomeys have both separately and together found the strength to carry on.

John acts as the family rock, shouldering the weight of sadness that at times threatens their sanity. He functions as both protector and keeper, displaying a fierce sense of loyalty to his now smaller tribe. He quietly leads by example and works tirelessly to help establish a new sense of normal.

Connor is the glue that holds the family together. His sense of self despite being thrust into the role of only child, never ceases to wow his parents. Connor chooses to live life and to create new memories as a way to honor the brother he adored. He maintains that it’s better to be happy than sad and encourages his parents to enjoy every moment.

Hallie carries a burden of guilt surrounding CJ’s death, which she in turn has channeled into a life of advocacy. She turns to her husband and son for support both emotionally and physically but also knows that helping others, helps her. Hallie works through her guilt by communicating in raw detail, as often as possible, with anyone who will listen. She shares the trauma CJ’s death has left behind in hopes that his story may help prevent others from following in his footsteps.



Scattering CJ was an idea born out of Hallie’s need to do something more for her son, but it would not have been possible without the full support of John and Connor. Over the past four years, all three have opened themselves to this journey and trusted that it was the right decision. They agree that CJ’s journey on this planet isn’t over and that his ‘larger than life personality’ should travel far and wide. They are humbled and honored by the response Scattering CJ has received and owe a debt of gratitude to all those who now consider themselves a part of the Scattering CJ community.”

- Hallie Twomey

SUICIDE BY THE NUMBERS

- Nearly 800,000 people die by suicide each year worldwide.¹
- 44,000 Americans die by suicide each year.²
- Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for more than 1% of all deaths.³
- In the United States, suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 15-29.⁴
- Each day approximately 21 United States military veterans and active duty personnel take their own lives. In 2018, 6,132 veterans and 1,387 active duty personnel died by suicide.⁵
- Experiencing conflict, disaster, violence, abuse, or loss and a sense of isolation are strongly associated with suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Suicide rates are also high among vulnerable groups who experience discrimination such as refugees and migrants, indigenous people, members of the LGBTQ+ community and prisoners.⁶

If you or someone you know is in crisis don't wait to act!
Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

¹ World Health Organization

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

⁵ Department of Veterans Affairs

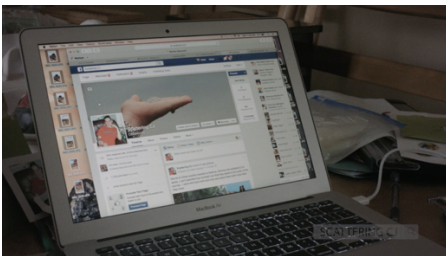
⁶ World Health Organization

VIDEOS AND LINKS



Scattering CJ Trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4zeH6Ee-Xg>



Project Launch

<https://bit.ly/2YRKzAp>



Hallie & John packing ashes

<https://bit.ly/2ZDDuR6>



Skydiving with CJ's ashes

<https://bit.ly/2YCCi4h>

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CREDITS

Directed and Written by: Andrea Kalin

Produced by: Andrea Kalin, p.g.a.

Producer: David Lobatto

Directors of Photography: Ethan Oser, Theo Schear & Mark Smith

Music Composed, Recorded and Mixed by: Ceiri Torjussen

Sound Design: Cheryl Ottenritter & Rick Rush

Re-Recording Mixed: Cheryl Ottenritter

Audio Post Facility: Ott House Audio

Colorist: Leo Fallas

Motion Graphics & Compositor: Luis G. Portillo

Graphic Designer: Kelly Vella

Associate Producer: Ethan Oser

Production Manager: James Mirabello

Field Producers: Yael Luttwak & Karen Simon



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WORLD PREMIERE OF *SCATTERING CJ* DOCUMENTARY
AT CAMDEN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL—SEPTEMBER 12-15**

*“Mother on a Mission” to Prevent Suicide and Raise Awareness of Mental Health Issues
Highlights the Power of Healing and Connection Through Social Media*

WASHINGTON, DC –More than four years in the making, [Scattering CJ](#), written, produced and directed by Andrea Kalin of Spark Media, with producer David Lobatto, will debut at the Camden International Film Festival, Maine, September 12-15. The feature-length documentary follows the efforts of Hallie Twomey and her family to heal following the traumatic loss of their elder son CJ to suicide.

“My son’s suicide killed the person I was before. Yet, it’s also driven me to action.”

The story, both uplifting and raw, examines how military recruit CJ’s memory is kept alive through the kindness of strangers willing to scatter his ashes in places of meaning and beauty throughout the world. Hallie initiated the social media phenomenon known as Scattering CJ through a request on Facebook for assistance in helping memorialize her son.

The request went viral and was answered by more than 20,000 people, igniting a global movement that not only helped the Twomey family but countless others struggling with mental health or the loss of a loved one to suicide.

“There is no ‘good news story’ when it comes to suicide,” said Andrea Kalin, the film’s director. “But the innate goodness Hallie hit upon when she put out that call to the world on Facebook so many years ago remains profoundly moving and inspiring to us. Hallie trusted us to chronicle her family’s story during a period of unimaginable loss, and we never took that trust lightly. The story illustrates the extraordinary bonds formed between strangers through social media and is a much needed antidote to the darker side of the Internet.”

“The process of making this film has only reinforced to me a thousand times over that we are all responsible for our state of mental health as a society,” said David Lobatto, the film’s producer. “To assert that you will never be affected by mental illness, directly or indirectly, throughout your lifetime is like saying you will never catch a cold or cut your finger. It is through the incredible endeavors of people like Hallie Twomey and the prowess of activists like Andrea Kalin that shame can be driven out of the subject and the tools to get help for people in need can be most widely and effectively deployed.”

Scattering CJ will reach beyond the screen to people from all walks of life, with special focus directed to the military community and young people—both groups at high risk for mental health issues and suicide. Activities to engage communities include expert panel discussions at screenings, on-demand screenings, live-performances, mental health first aid trainings, Capitol Hill rallies and Facebook live-sessions to connect people all over the world.

Scattering CJ and its social impact program will roll out over the next two years, with screening and programming in major cities across the United States and abroad. The American Association of Suicidology and other partners working in the areas of mental health and suicide prevention have endorsed the project.

View the trailer for the film at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4zeH6Ee-Xg>

Access press materials online 24 hours a day at scatteringcjfilm.com & sparkmedia.org

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About Spark Media:

Founded by filmmaker Andrea Kalin in 1989, Washington D.C.-based Spark Media specializes in producing trailblazing documentaries, interactive content and outreach initiatives tied to social missions. With over 100 industry awards, Spark Media strives to both inform and inspire audiences with stories that are compelling, entertaining and real.