

MOVIES

She fought cystic fibrosis for more than 20 years. Now a NJ director is sharing her story



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Mallory Smith struggled with cystic fibrosis for most of her life. She also unflinchingly documented years of her daily triumphs, trials and tribulations.

Now, a New Jersey filmmaker is sharing Mallory's story with the world.

Will Battersby, who lives in Verona in Essex County, is the director of the tender, heartfelt and unflinching new documentary "Salt in My Soul."

"For me the moving thing about her story in the current period where we're all suffering immense physical, emotional stuff (is that) life is hard enough without a global pandemic, being separated from people and all of those things," Battersby said, "and I hope what Mallory's story shows is it's OK to have all of those feelings."



Mallory Smith in Will Battersby's "Salt in My Soul." *Courtesy Of Giant Pictures*

Mallory, who grew up in California and died in 2017 at the age of 25, never shied away from the reality of her condition. She had fought cystic fibrosis for more than 20 years after being diagnosed when she was 3 years old.

She left behind 2,500 pages of diary entries, hundreds of hours of footage and audio recordings. Her diaries were released as "Salt in My Soul: An Unfinished Life" by Penguin Random House in 2019.

"(Mallory's story shows) it's OK to feel depressed, it's OK to feel anxious, it's OK to feel sick, physically," Battersby said. "And the important thing is to express yourself in some way. Through writing, that was Mallory's way."

The film opens in New York City and Los Angeles cinemas on Friday, Jan. 21, and will be available on video-on-demand platforms on Jan. 25. It will also screen at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 6, at the ShowRoom Cinema in Asbury Park, followed by a question-and-answer session with the filmmaking team.



Mallory Smith in Will Battersby's "Salt in My Soul." *Courtesy Of Giant Pictures*

There is plenty of science to be found in "Salt in My Soul," as Mallory, her doctors and her parents, Diane and Mark, work tirelessly to find treatments for her condition. The documentary even captures potentially groundbreaking advancements in phage therapy techniques for battling infection.

But Battersby was sure to keep his focus on the human aspect of the story, with science playing a crucial supporting role.



Mallory Smith, left, and Diane Shader Smith in Will Battersby's "Salt in My Soul." *Courtesy Of Giant Pictures*

“It’s almost too easy to make an issue-based doc these days, a science-based doc, but they’re not cinematic,” he said. “They can be interesting, but they don’t necessarily move you and that’s not the kind of filmmaker, director, producer I am or want to be.

“So I knew I wanted to tell a human story. I wanted to tell a story with characters and I knew just from reading her memoir that Mallory was an amazing character. Then I knew from speaking to Diane that Diane was an amazing character, too.”