HOLLYWOODGLEE, LLC
1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |https://hollywoodglee.com Larry@HollywoodGlee.com

Newtown â?? Confronting the Sandy Hook Massacre

Description

Newtown is a moving new documentary detailing the trauma and tribulations of families and community members dealing with emotions and life after the massacre of 20 children ages 6-7 years old and six adult staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut by 20 year-old Adam Lanza. Lanza had murdered his own mother before driving to Sandy Hook and opening fire with an XM-15 military style M4 carbine rifle. Lanza fired 154 rounds with multiple magazine changes from high capacity 30-round magazines to 15-round magazines. The rounds reverberated over the schoolâ??s PA system.

Newtown was directed by Kim A. Snyder. Snyder is a New York based filmmaker known for *I Remember Me*, *One Bridge To The Next* and *Welcome To Shelbyville.*

The film opens in a slow-motion sequence of a parade with children in cheer-leading uniforms riding in convertibles in what could be any middle-lass suburb and provides a rather visceral idyllic sentiment of a happy childhood. In a rather seamless fashion, the film cuts to live footage from what appears to be a police vehicleâ??s on-board camera while a voice over from a 911 call is heard. Immediately, the mood of the film changes. Something has happened. Black and white aerial footage of the school and surrounding area, including a nearby evacuation location, a volunteer fire fighting house culminating in live news coverage of the massacre is shown as details are slowly revealed.

Snyder effectively incorporates the interview into her narrative throughout weaving testimonies into the filmâ??s narrative interspersed with sweeping scenes of the natural beauty of the area. The Sandy Hook School Nurse, Sally Cox, described her feelings hearing the shots being fired wondering when they would stop. A Connecticut State Trooper refused to discuss the graphic details of what he saw at the crime scene focusing on the emotional impact instead. And this theme drives the film.

Snyder artfully uses text overlays with Newtown neighbors communicating with each other during the immediate aftermath. The first text reveals safety for one child and then the news of a child, Daniel Barden, who died. An emotional medium close up framed interview of Danielâ??s father, Mark, as he laments not knowing his sonâ??s final moments takes the filmâ??s emotionality to a deeper level. Additional interviews of the Bardenâ??s close neighbor recounting the Friday â??after school pizza

partiesâ?• and the bonding between the two families keep the emotional roller coaster going. An adept point-of-view tracking shot of the communityâ??s pastor as he solemnly makes his way to the church altar to prepare for the upcoming funeral masses opens up a massive void that no one has wanted to talk about. The feeling there is no way to prevent this from happening again surfaces.

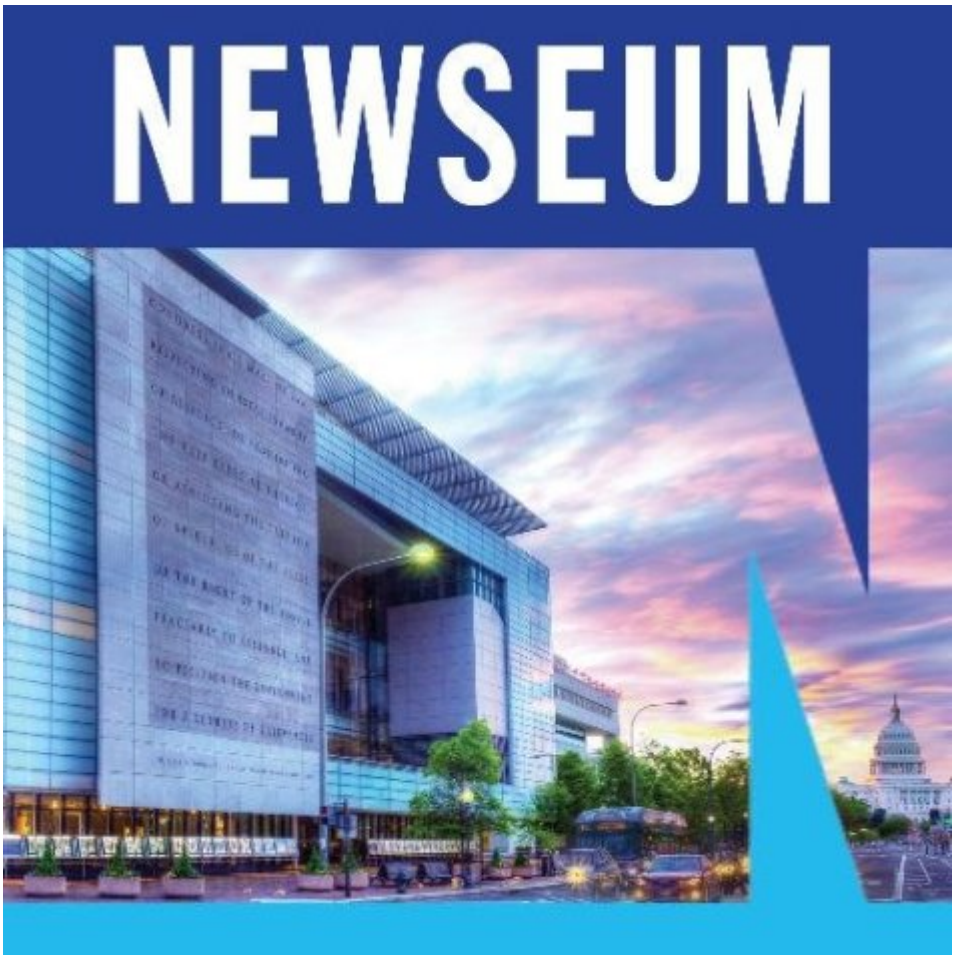
Snyder reaches back and adds more archival footage of Congressional hearings with testimony from Newtownâ??s Dr. William Begg, Emergency Room Services Director. Dr. Begg testifies to the impact assault bullets have on little bodies and the survivability when the bodies have been riddled with anywhere from three to eleven assault rounds. Another clip shows President of the United States, Barack Obama, praising the Connecticutâ??s sweeping new gun law legislation as he urges Congress to follow suit.

â??The number 12/14 has become a defining moment for many members of the community,â?• reveals a Sandy Hook Elementary School teacher. Here Snyder inserts stunning cinematography starting with a ray of light shimmering through autumnal leaves. Quickly apples are revealed and soon a hand and footage of a family apple-picking event foreshadow the Bardenâ??s decision to conceive another child.

As time passes questions are being asked on how can the community honor these children and what can be done to help as the community searches for answers. The grieving process has begun following the massive trauma and shock they have experienced.

As the film moves toward its conclusion, a community event including a challenging obstacle course draws the survivors together as they attempt to overcome the difficulties imposed. As participants struggle to make the finishing line cheers and support are given. Another powerful metaphor Snyder wields with grace and finesse. And again, she reaches back into her tool kit and uses text overlays as the community shares their grief online as they move forward after 12/14/12.

Admittedly, *Newtown* is an emotionally draining film. Snyderâ??s direction slowly draws out the emotional strings while infusing hope and a call to action of â??we are all in this together.â?• http://newtownfilm.com/. Indeed.



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12. Program
13. Q&A
14. Sandy Hook Elementary School
15. Washington D.C.
16. Writer

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hollywoodglee