



## MELAINA HAAS

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I first discovered the Collateral Damage project through my work as social media specialist for the 2011 Courtnall Celebrity Classic, a mental health fundraiser in Victoria, BC put on by Russ, Geoff and Bruce Courtnall. The star-studded event (a combination red carpet gala dinner with silent and live auctions and golf tournament) is presented in memory of Archie Courtnall, the brothers' father who lost his life to suicide in 1978 due to inefficient mental resources.

It didn't take Scott, being the sneaky guy he is, long to figure out who was behind the Courtnall Celebrity Classic Twitter account. And in June 2011, Scott asked me to join the Collateral Damage project's advisory board as a social media specialist -- for me, it was an easy "yes!"

My role with the Collateral Damage project is focused on social media, with a touch of writing here and there. I have a huge passion for social media and know that it, if used right, can be an awesome tool for change and conversation -- two things we're trying to accomplish with the Collateral Damage project.

Suicide prevention is so important. For too long, suicide (and mental illness as a whole) has been a closeted topic -- people are afraid to talk about this stigmatized area of health and, as a result, lives are unnecessarily being lost. The time is now to take a stand against suicide by educating ourselves and engaging in tough conversations.

If one person -- just one -- comes to me to say that the Collateral Damage project helped save their life, then it's all been worth it.

