**2009 Nat’l Respite Conference**

**Breakout Session Handout**

**Finding Respite Overview (pg. 1 of 4)**

Presenter Louise A. Bruce

**Finding Respite!**

**Introduction to Presenter & Breakout Session**

**Presenter:** Louise Bruce is the founder and Executive Director of The LaChris Connection. TLC’s mission is to ensure that families of children with special needs have easy access respite & adventures. Louise has parented three delightful kids, two of whom were born with cerebral palsy. Parenting children with special needs, being a social worker to many and her experiences as E.D. of TLC are what support the content of this workshop. The back of TLC’s brochure clarifies why Louise often refers to her children, and care-giving experiences, in the past tense. Her personal story includes the deaths of two of her children, Laura & Christopher. Her courageous middle son, Ben, is a sophomore at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and has, thankfully, moved beyond the teenage ‘alien invasion’ years! Louise has also been the primary caregiver for a parent. In 1989 her family of 3 moved in with her Mom whom they cared for through the last stages of cancer and final year of life. She and her hubby of 25 years reside in Northern California where they appreciate the beauty of Marin County every day!

**Session Overview:**

**Semantics:** I don’t know about you, but, for years I used the term ‘caregiver’ to refer to persons hired to help. Well, I’ve been re-educated and am going to attempt to use the ‘industry proper’ terms:

1. Caregiver – refers to the full time, usually family member, primarily responsible for another’s special needs (hence “primary caregiver”).
2. Respite Providers/Workers – refers to the, hired persons or volunteers who give the full time family member / guardian a break … or ‘respite’ from their, often relentless, duties.
3. Client – Typically refers to the person/family member who needs assistance because of disabilities or diagnoses.

**Finding Respite!** Familiar with relentless attempts to match‐up your family’s needs with a helper? Can't connect with one another? Tired that 1/1 interviews don’t reveal much … and other dead‐ends? This breakout session / workshop will cover:

1. An overview of the unmet need
2. Proven models where fatigued caregivers are introduced to respite providers in a pleasant setting!
3. Successful stories of agency collaboration within a geographic area that address the issues of a families need for respite!
4. Great news of the for-profit company *care.com* partnering with TLC and individuals and agencies like yourselves to ensure pools of special needs care providers and resources for all concerned!

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**Innovative Ways to “Connect” Caregivers/Families**

**with Respite/Care Providers**

Identifying the importance of this often unmet need!

1. Why caregivers need respite provisions
   1. Conventional wisdom:
   2. Thoughts on those who seek respite:
   3. Thoughts on those who do NOT seek respite:
   4. Workshop participant’s thoughts:
2. Why respite providers enjoy what they do:
   1. Conventional wisdom:
   2. From an empty or full place
   3. Workshop participant’s thoughts:
3. Why ***clients*** (person with diagnoses) ***need*** caregivers/family to receive respite!
   1. Practical
   2. Social
   3. Emotional

Because of the above there is the need for ground floor & continued education, such as:

1. For families/caregiver to clarify the need for respite
2. Painting the accurate picture for current & potential care providers that the family member with special needs in NOT, themselves, a burden, just meeting some of the ongoing special needs requires a ‘2nd pair of hands’.

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Even if all this were in perfect order, in our community, the need for a pool of care providers interested in working with special needs and/or the ability to network the care providers with families in need was the true unmet need that The LaChris Connection set out to address.

TLC’s experience in building this model and the 3 legged stool

1. On-line networking & recruitment via care.com partnership
2. Hands-on, personal “connecting” met through the Meet the Parents model
3. Ongoing need for orientations & training of current and potential providers

Overview of the “Meet the Parents” model:

1. A mixer / party where entire families of children with special need and recruited care providers meeting and mingle and connect.
2. Not a quick fix. Meet the Parents must be organized and facilitated
3. Barriers to overcome in the Meet the Parents model

Surprising, useful outcomes of the “Meet the Parent” mixers:

1. Parents “practicing” receiving respite!
2. Orientation experience for those only considering care provider work
3. Facilitators’ observation of care providers’ comfort level and effectiveness
4. Parents’ interaction and connecting.
5. Entertainment that bring the “star” out in kids AND a generally fun, family outing!

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Common resources for finding care providers that are accessible by all:

1. Without the organization and/or facilitation of something like these mixers, some great resources for finding care providers:
   1. Local Colleges – Note: internship opportunities can be established
   2. Therapy practitioners and schools
   3. “Out of the Box” respite ideas allow for high school and faith based org recruitment

Taking “respite” out of the box

Handout listing various forms of respite and group discussion of other ideas!

The model of TLC’s MRCC – Multi Agency Collaboratives

1. Local agencies that serve special needs working together
2. “Fire lit under” agencies’ back-burnered goals/funding earmarked for respite
3. Avoidance of duplication of efforts
4. Pooling the trainings opportunities already available

Care.com’s Resources and Relationships to agencies being made available!

1. Care provider seeking services
2. Background checks AND vetting & screening of care providers you may find and/or recruit
3. Alliance relationships with agencies that serve special needs which will provide deals for decreased costs of care.com member services
4. Sponsorship of the National modeling of “Meet the Parents” in as many as 15 cities across the U.S.
5. Continued relations with agencies who serve special needs to determine the caregiver/family needs that can be met by resources care.com might be able to provide, including possible training materials to keep us all from reinventing that proverbial wheel!