

## Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus Newsletter

Dear Readers,

I am happy to announce that the next release of "Right on Target" will be the first newsletter as Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus (CABSS), the new name of my association that will take the place of the "Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus and better represent the activities done with such commitment and dedication.

The CABSS newsletter will continue to keep you up to date on early intervention programs and projects for deaf and deafblind children. You will also be informed about new fundraising initiatives that support our mission.

In addition, we will provide you with more information in the scientific and academic world devoted to infant deafness and deafblindness. As you will read in the scientific section, my association has gain full recognition in the scientific world thanks to Dr. Stefania Fadda, confirmed director for the fourth consecutive year, and the staff of professionals who work together on a daily basis to achieve results that are always more increasingly positive with the children.

Happy Reading!



Roberto E. Wirth

President



### Rachel Heuston: Fulbright Scholarship at the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus

The Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus is proud to announce that we will be hosting Rachel Heuston, the winner of the 2011-2012 Fulbright Scholarship in Deafness and DeafBlindness. This scholarship allows a graduate student from the United States to conduct research, to teach, and/or collaborate on new projects in deafness-related fields in Italy.



Rachel Heuston received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education while also studying American Sign Language (ASL) and Spanish at the University of Minnesota. During her undergraduate studies, gained experience working

with DeafBlind children at summer camps and in the community.

After graduating, she worked as a DeafBlind Intervenor in an elementary school for a first grade student. In 2011 she graduated with her Master's Degree in Special Education: Severe and Multiple Disabilities - DeafBlindness at the University of Arizona, and has been teaching students with severe disabilities at the elementary level.

She is most passionate about increasing communication skills and expanding meaningful opportunities for students who have combined vision and hearing loss. Rachel will join the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus at the beginning of January and she will stay until July 2012 to help plan and implement a professional development program in deafblindness. She will also document progress and do research on communication development in children who are deafblind in Italy.





# Scientific articles

## The European Society for Mental Health and Deafness (ESMHD)

The European Society for Mental Health and Deafness (ESMHD) is an international organization that has been reuniting psychiatrists, psychologists and psychotherapists who are experts in the area of Deafness and Mental Health from all over the world since 1986. Their mission is to promote mental health of deaf individuals where “mental health” is intended to mean healthy psychological, emotional and social development as well as prevention, assessment, diagnosis and treatment of psychological and psychopathological disorders.

ESMHD celebrated their 25th anniversary and hosted a Special Interest Group Conference that was held on the 5th-8th of October, 2011 in Tenerife, Spain. This event made it possible for professionals and international experts in the field of deafness and mental health to meet each other. They were divided into two groups, Deaf Adults and Families” and “Deaf Children and Families”. In the area dedicated to deaf children, Doctor Stefania Fadda represented Italy and presented a report on the Benefits of Early Intervention using a Multisensory Approach: promoting psychological development in Deaf and Deafblind children”.

Within the ESMHD organization, SIG proposes to support the objectives of ESMHD by organizing meetings (general and international), seminars

and workshops in the area of childhood, adolescence and adulthood public health. In 2009, for the first time, we had a SIG meeting in Italy in Rome thanks to the collaboration between the Roberto Wirth Fund and ESMHD.

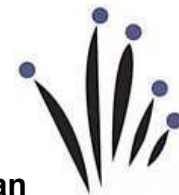
At Tenerife, in the focus group for “Deaf Children and Families”, scholars and intervention professionals presented research, discussed mental health situations in their country, analyzed case histories, shared experiences, information, practical work and intervention.



Amongst the reports that were the most interesting included, “Educating professionals in Deaf CAMHS” (A. Ridley, M. Barker, P. Hodgons, P. Inglis, UK) and “Teams and Hearing Staff. Working and Learning Together” (R. Hayes, T. Richardson, UK) that showed the importance of having trained professionals in the area of service in Mental Health field who are educated in deafness. Professionals,

who can respond to the specific needs of children and be able to communicate in their preferred language (Sign Language or Spoken Language) to reduce the number of errors made in diagnosing.

Such errors could be reduced through the use of diagnostic instruments adapted to the needs of deaf patients, like those that are used in assessing Autism in Norway and spoken about in the report, “Assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorders in Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and Adolescents: An attempt to adapt diagnostic tools and challenges in interpreting results” (B. Schie Bernsten, S. Kjuus, L. Randa Nielsen, Norway).



Different reports have confronted the issue of Cochlear Implants (CI). One of the most interesting was about “Deaf children with Cochlear Implants and their families” (I. Leigh, L. Rush, USA) which reported the results of research done on the psychological health of children and adolescents implanted and their families.

The experts discussed the difficulties that hearing parents with deaf children face and often focus on the difficulties they experience with their child's deafness. Such difficulties acted to reduce the quality of life of children and families, and point to the importance of parents being able to receive psychological support from the moment their child is diagnosed as being deaf.

The report presented by Doctor Stefania Fadda focussed on the Individualized Early Intervention Programs for Deaf and Deafblind Children carried out at the Roberto Wirth Fund, programs, done in the Multisensory Laboratory, an environment that is accessible, consisting of innovative instruments and equipment used for tactile, vision, hearing, olfactory, motor, social-emotional and communication stimulation. In the laboratory, children learn to make choices, have control over their environment and communicate in the way that meets their specialized needs. Parents participate in activities with their children, learn a communicative model to use with their child and receive support in raising their children.

The psychological well-being of deaf children and their families is important for an adequate cognitive, emotional, socio-relational, communicative and linguistic development in children and to obtain a positive quality of life. Health is the main objective of the network of experts that were reunited during the SIG Meeting at ESMHD and Tenerife, where there was a common ground established and a place where future goals were made to improve the lives of deaf children and their families.

## **XVII National Congress of the Italian Society of Neonatology**

The National Congress of Neonatology, organized by SIN (The Italian Society of Neonatology), its XVII edition was held on the 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011 in Sorrento. A very prestigious scientific event which aims to train and update physicians and nurses as to how to promote the physical and mental health of newborns.

At the XVII Congress, divided into 20 sessions, they were intervention experts from all over the world. Doctor Stefania Fadda presented a report entitled, “Psychological Aspects encountered by families of children with Cochlear Implants” at the round table devoted to neonatal screening and deafness. She started with the debate on Cochlear Implants and its role in the development of the potentiality of deaf children. She then proposed a psychological analysis of the path taken by families of implanted children, from the time the child receives a diagnosis of deafness until post-implantation. On this pathway and at all stages of child development, psychologists and early intervention programs play a key role.

### **The XVII**

The report done by Dr. Fadda was published in The American Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine, the official scientific journal of SIN and other international organizations such as The European Association of Perinatal Medicine and Ibero-American Society for Prenatal Diagnosis and Therapy.





# Activities and Projects

## Canadian Intervenor Students in Italy: Lisa Bentivoglio and Morgan Epp

In May 2011, RWF welcomed its first placements students from George Brown College from the Intervenor for Deafblind Persons Program in Toronto, Canada. All students are specialized in the area of Deafblindness and are formally trained to work with individuals who are Deafblind. Both students were happy to share their reflections about their experience at RWF with. "Right on Target".

"I was given the opportunity to have a five week placement abroad at RWF. The opportunities I was able to participate in and the incredible team I worked with at the organization were truly life changing. I was given the honour and privilege of working with three incredible young children, and their families. The overwhelming acceptance and warmth I received from these individuals was amazing, and I appreciate them allowing me into their lives. Working with all of the resources in the laboratory was a wonderful experience. The opportunities for the students to learn in this environment are outstanding. There are so many stimulating tools that can be used to suit any child's sensory preference. At RWF, I worked on a presentation to create awareness and advocate for RWF. Once, I returned to Toronto, I presented to the faculty of the program at George Brown College and it was received with great interest and support. Thank you Mr. Wirth and all of the staff at RWF for providing me with an experience of a lifetime, one that I will never forget!"  
*Morgan Epp*



"I have always been interested in having a career where I got to work in different countries and this placement opened the doors to fulfilling that dream. I was happy to have had the opportunity to participate in all of the children's programs. In each session, the parents had the opportunity to be present in the multi-sensory laboratory, with their child and the intervenor. I find this to be extremely valuable for the parents in teaching them how to interact and play with their child appropriately and in a positive manner. Staff work to ensure that the children who attend the centre and their parents get the proper resources that will empower and help them in advocating for their rights. This experience is one I shall never forget and forever be grateful for. I learned a lot about teamwork and that everyone has a voice. At this placement, I was encouraged to use my voice and share my insights and knowledge. This experience taught me to have more confidence in my abilities as an intervenor and as a person. It was a unique experience being in Italy and being apart of an organization that is filled with passionate and devoted individuals."

*Lisa Bentivoglio*



# Fundraising



## A portrait to celebrate Christmas with the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus

On the 17th of December, at the elegant and inviting Hotel Hassler, President Roberto Wirth welcomed everyone who came to celebrate Christmas with the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus. An evening of charity and fundraising dedicated to early individualized intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children and psychological support for families.

At the event a "lotteria del gusto –taste lottery" was held with a dinner for two raffled off to some of the most acclaimed and prestigious restaurants in the capital. We were very thankful to all the restaurants that participated and the generosity they showed.



most accomplished photographers of today.

Many people at the event danced and celebrated, lifting their glasses in a toast of warm wishes filled with laughter. An atmosphere undoubtedly, filled with happiness and cheer. In the shadows of the giant Christmas tree, an exchange of holiday wishes were infinite and among those individuals included: Roberto Ciufoli, Beppe Fiorello, Marie Mons, Veronika Logan, Roman noblewomen and noblemen and Ambassadors who came together to support deaf and deafblind children at the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus!

## Charity Auction for the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus

Last September, a charity dinner was held for the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus at the splendid Chiostrò del Bramante.

The hostess of the evening, Eleonora Daniele a renowned anchorwoman, offered her time to support deaf and deafblind children in raising funds to benefit early intervention programs at the Roberto Wirth Fund.

A candle lit atmosphere was the backdrop of the charity auction of contemporary art and the auctioneer from

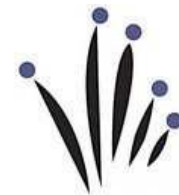
**Christie's.**

Many generous artists contributed their artwork to the event including Mark Kostabi, Tommaso Cascella, Matteo Basile, Sara Chiarugi, Oliviero Rainaldi and Lola Vitelli. After the auction, many guests got the opportunity to listen and see the **Coro delle Mani Bianche** of the Scuola Popolare di Musica of Testaccio, children and teenagers who wore white gloves and sang/ signed songs that were choreographed and inspired by Italian Sign Language (LIS).

A wonderful performance was done by a jazz trio, entitled, "**Notes of Sand**". Images were created onto a light table made of sand set to music making for a harmonious composition of elements and an extraordinary show.

That night, in the beating heart of charity in Rome, President Roberto Wirth embraced everyone who participated in making the evening a unique event of fundraising.





## Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus Favors: a gesture that lasts.

They are finally here! The Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus Favors. Now you can replace the traditional favors with a gesture of solidarity on behalf of deaf and deafblind children.

RWF favors are designed for any occasion: weddings, births, baptisms, communions, confirmations, 18th birthdays, graduation, silver and golden wedding anniversaries. For each event you can choose between two designs.



RWF staff will send you the ready-made scrolls: just roll them and the ribbon of your choice.

The proceeds from the favors will be used to implement the many projects that Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus is dedicated to in supporting deaf and deafblind children and their families.

For orders and more information visit our website [www.robortowirthingfund.net](http://www.robortowirthingfund.net) or write directly to [info@robortowirthingfund.net](mailto:info@robortowirthingfund.net).

## Support us!

**Donate Online** at our website:  
[www.robortowirthingfund.net](http://www.robortowirthingfund.net);

**Bank transfer** made out to the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus, Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 – 00187 Roma.

Banca Popolare di Novara  
IBAN: IT 57 W 05608 03200 000000020246  
Bic/Swift: NVRBIT2N060

Please indicate your name, address and telephone number on the transfer, so that we can send you a receipt.

**Non-transferable check** made out to the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus and sent to the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus, Via Nomentana 56 – 00161 Rome along with your information (name, surname, address and phone number).

**PLEASE NOTE - your donation is tax deductible!**

### Quarterly Newsletter of the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus No. 9 Autumn/Winter 2011

Via Nomentana 56 – 00161 Rome  
Tel. 06 89561038  
Fax 06 89561040  
Cel. 331 8520534

Email [info@robortowirthingfund.net](mailto:info@robortowirthingfund.net)  
Tax Number: 97350450587

[www.robortowirthingfund.net](http://www.robortowirthingfund.net)

**Director:** Giustino Ruggieri

**Editor:** Stefania Fadda

**Writers:** Giuseppa Caravello, Marta Cidronelli, Laura Harripersad, Rachel Heuston

**Graphics:** Marta Cidronelli

**Printing:** CSR srl, Via di Pietralata 157, Roma  
Tel. 06 4182113 / Fax 06 4506671

**Registration - Tribunale di Roma:**  
N° 499 del 07/11/2007