

THE FIRST STEP



Dear Readers

As you can see, there have been two noticeable changes to our newsletter: a new layout and a new title! We chose the colors blue and orange because they are the official colours of CABSS. The logo of CABSS is blue and the main colour of the laboratory at CABSS is orange symbolizing the place where children who are deaf and deafblind, 0-6 years of age, meet every day with staff to engage in fun and stimulating activities. We chose, "Il Primo Passo..." / "The First Step..." which is also the name of our multisensory laboratory, because it symbolizes the first step that each child takes in our laboratory realizing their potential, developing skills, and obtaining a better quality of life.

I would like to inaugurate our new newsletter by announcing that Silvia Palmieri, a Deaf graduate in Graphic Design is the winner of the 2014 / 2015 "Fulbright Roberto Wirth" Scholarship. Ms. Palmieri is currently at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C., in the U.S.A., where she is applying her knowledge to

the area of Childhood Deafness. I am sure that when Silvia returns, she will make a significant contribution to children who are deaf in Italy.

The director of CABSS, Stefania Fadda presented in Austria on the multisensory early intervention programs at CABSS at the 2nd International Congress on "Family-Centred Early Intervention for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" (FCEI).

I am also pleased to inform American citizens that they can now make a tax deductible donation to CABSS directly from the U.S. through the King Badouin Foundation.

Among our fundraising initiatives, I have to say that the Burraco tournament organized by the "Associazione di Piazza di Spagna" e "Associazione Via Condotti" was a fun filled evening of giving.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank

Fondazione BNL for their donation, making it possible for CABSS to equip its multisensory laboratory with specialized learning resources and Fondazione Nando Peretti for the support they have given to the "Growing Step by Step. Multisensory Early Intervention for Deafblind Children"



Kindest Regards



SCIENTIFIC AREA

The Winner of the 2014-2015 “Fulbright- Roberto Wirth” Scholarship, Silvia Palmieri

President Roberto Wirth is proud to announce that Silvia Palmieri, an Italian student who is Deaf, is the winner of the 2014-2015 “Fulbright-Roberto Wirth” Scholarship.

The “Fulbright-Roberto Wirth” scholarship is a part of the Fulbright Deafness Program and allows students to take courses in the area of Childhood Deafness. Gallaudet University is located in Washington D.C. and is the only bilingual (American Sign Language and English) university in the world.

Silvia Palmieri, graduated with top marks in Graphic Design and was chosen as the winner of the scholarship by members of the Fulbright Commission for the cultural ex-

change between the U.S. and Italy, experts in Deafness and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United States Embassy.

Fluent in English and Sign Language, Silvia Palmieri departed for Gallaudet University where she'll work towards designing a project in the area of education and technology with the goal of improving the quality of life of Italian children who are deaf .



International congress on Family-Centered Early Intervention in Bad Ischl, Austria

CABSS couldn't miss the opportunity to attend the International Congress on “Family-Centred Early Intervention for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing” (FCEI). The congress was held from the 11th-13th of June, 2014 and organized by the St. John of God Hospital in Linz, Austria. CABSS was represented by Stefania Fadda who presented on Congenital Deafblindness in Children.

FCEI 2014 welcomed professionals, researchers and parents from all over the world. All participants were able to engage in discussions, receive training and be informed about early intervention services for children who are deaf and deafblind. The theme of this year's congress was “Forging Global Collaboration”. Participants were able to attend seminars, workshops, and poster presentations that facilitated networking and collaboration. All presentations at the congress illustrated innovative models of early intervention that ad-

ressed topics related to the importance of assessment in identifying the potential of deaf and deafblind children, understanding the specialized needs of children and families, analyzing the interaction among parents/children and assessing psycho-social and emotional skills.

“The importance of international collaboration”, the theme at the FCEI is highly valued at CABSS. CABSS collaborates on an international level with George Brown College, located in Toronto, Canada, one of the most important educational institutes in the world specialized in Deafblindness and Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., the only bilingual university in the world (English and American Sign Language), fully accessible to individuals who are Deaf. CABSS also collaborates on a regional/local level with professionals that work with the child in other contexts (teachers, communication assistants, speech therapists, psychomotor

parents, supporting all figures in learning specialized techniques and methods of communication important in meeting the needs of children who are deafblind.



Tactile Cognition: Active Touch to Tactile Communication

Little is known about tactile cognition and until recently few studies have attempted to investigate the effects of tactile cognition. Much of the theoretical insights on the principles governing cognition have been developed based on research on auditory and visual systems. However, thanks to recent developments in cognitive neuroscience (neuroimaging and neuropsychology) we know far more about the mechanisms underlying tactile cognition.

Making sense of our touch

The sense of touch is the first sense to develop, in fact, just before the eighth week of gestation, an embryo may develop sensitivity to tactile stimulation. Touch is our social sense and provides the opportunity to make contact with the external world and people. "Interpersonal touch" is important to our emotional well being and touch is often overlooked as a channel of communication and this concerns not only just our hands but our entire body. A strong link has been shown between the processing of tactile information and emotions, and emotions are a powerful motivator to tactile learning.

"Active Touch" and "Tactile Cognition"

"Active touch" or also known as haptics, is when an individual intentionally chooses his or her actions in the manipulation and exploration of objects. It plays a valuable and frequent role in our everyday life. If you think about when you have to find something at the bottom of your purse or pocket or try to answer the phone or switch on light at night, active touch informs us and helps us decipher one object from another. "Tactile cognition" refers to the higher order processing and integration of tactile information through active touch.

The Tactile Brain

Tactile information is processed through our sense of touch. The tac-

tile processing system consists of touch messages, tactile sensation, tactile perception and tactile cognition. Information gathered by our tactile sense is processed, registered, encoded, stored and manipulated in the brain. Tactile sensations reach the brain by a complex interplay between the somatosensory pathways (nerve endings and receptors in the skin of the hand, foot and body) and the somatosensory cortex (regions in the brain involved in the processing of tactile information).

The somatosensory cortex is located in the parietal lobe in the brain and is responsible for receiving tactile



information from the hand, foot and body. Even though a larger proportion of the somatosensory cortex is in our hands some may think that it gives us most of touch information but we also receive much of our information from other parts of our body. The somatosensory cortex processes information related to touch in two distinct areas: the primary and secondary somatosensory cortex. The brain is divided into two distinct cerebral hemispheres. It has been shown hemispheric dominance when processing tactile information. A left hemispheric dominance is shown for tactile form recognition (what one is touching)

and a right hemispheric dominance for tactile localization (where one is being touched). In addition, it has been shown that left hemisphere is prone to processing local spatial details and the right hemisphere in processing global holistic spatial details.

Tactile Cognitions in the person who is Deafblind

Individuals who are deafblind use active touch in ways that no one else does to explore objects and the environment, to perceive feelings, to act and to communicate. There are a number of tactile communication and tactile language interventions used in the field of deafblindness such as full co-active signs, haptic communication, one hand co-active signs and hand over hand signing. Individuals who are deafblind are experienced in recognizing stimuli by active touch. Results from neuropsychological studies show that an adventitiously deafblind person took significantly lesser time to feel and remember objects and demonstrated superior performance in tactile memory when locating

objects. The studies indicate that individuals who are deafblind perform more effectively than sighted-hearing individuals when performing tasks using their tactile working memory and tactile memory. Individuals who are deafblind have more tactile experience because it is the sensory system that they must rely on for information. They can recognize an object by feeling a portion of it which acts as a signal for the whole image and a brief touch of an object, would be enough to prompt full recognition. Individuals who are deafblind have also been shown to have superior skills in encoding tactile spatial information.

(Source: Jude Nicholas, 2010)

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Fondazione Nando Peretti supports children who are deafblind at CABSS

We are pleased to announce the collaboration that has been established with the Nando Peretti Foundation (September 2014 to September 2015) as a result of a shared passion the Fondazione and CABSS have of promoting the protection and education of children who are at risk. Roberto Wirth and the Fondazione Nando Peretti agreed to make a contribution to the early intervention program "Growing Step by Step: Multisensory Early Intervention for Deafblind Children" at CABSS, the only one of its kind in Italy, for children who are congenitally deafblind, 0-6 years of age. The program was launched last September and is being carried out by professionals specialized in deafblindness in a multisensory laboratory equipped with innovative tools and specialized materials. Deafblindness is the combined loss of hearing and vision (total or partial) that affects the child's ability

to access information, develop communication skills and interact with his/her environment. Deafblindness also greatly affects the child's ability to acquire skills, develop concepts and attain independence. If the child who is deafblind is not supported early on in life they risk becoming isolated, not being able to communicate and access information which have serious implications on their learning and development. These difficulties can be overcome if a child is inserted into an early intervention program. Studies and research have shown that participation in an early intervention program positively affects the overall development of children who are deafblind. The collaboration between CABSS and Fondazione Nando Peretti, in favor of the "Growing Step by Step" program, will offer children who are deafblind the opportunity to benefit from a program that takes in

account their specialized needs. Children will be exposed to a variety of stimuli, encouraged to utilize all their senses, and will acquire a communication form that best suits their needs. Parents are also actively involved in their child's program and learn specific techniques and communication methods. The Fondazione, was created in 2000, and supports programs that promote human rights, medical research, culture and art and environmental conservation. They have supported over 480 projects all over the world.

The Multisensory Laboratory at CABSS for Children who are Deaf and Deafblind

CABSS would like to thank Fondazione BNL for the contribution they made from June 2013 to June 2014, to the multisensory laboratory, "Il Primo Passo..." (The First Step...), the first of its kind in Italy for children who are deaf and deafblind. The contribution given by BNL made it possible to obtain new specialized instruments and innovative learning materials for the laboratory.

Every instrument and learning tool has been carefully selected by the professionals at CABSS to meet the needs of children who are deaf and deafblind and to ensure that a safe, accessible and responsive environment is provided. All materials in the laboratory promote sensory stimulation and have positively im-

acted the lives of children who are deaf and deafblind. All children were enthusiastic to explore and interact with the new learning materials and instruments.

The generous donation made by Fondazione BNL supported

CABSS because it upholds its mission of promoting and carrying out charitable initiatives in the area of solidarity and health.



Amber Allan's experience, intern from Temple University, United States

Working at CABSS was an experience unlike any other because I also grew as a person. I chose to intern at a nonprofit organization because I have always been interested in that line of work. Until now most of my service events focused on helping the underprivileged elderly or teaching disadvantaged children. Before I came to CABSS, I never worked with the deaf community.

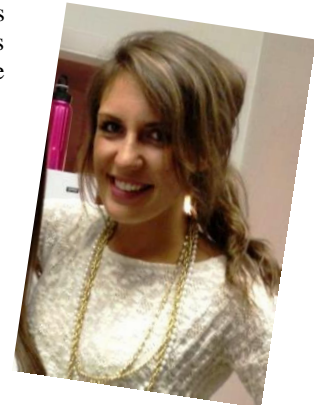
In the three months I worked at CABSS I learned from the staff that work diligently everyday. Each of them had a special love for the children they served.

I still recall watching the intervenor work with one of the infant patients for the first time. In that moment I realized exactly why I was there. Prior to seeing her interact with the children I would listen to her bubble

over with excitement as she told me about the children and the progression they made each week. It all sounded exciting and interesting but I never knew exactly what she was experiencing. I watched the intervenor interact with a CABSS patient, she smiled as the tiny child kicked with excitement. The educational, interactive toys I had been working so hard to fund surrounded this little child. These toys brought happiness and gave hope to her parents as they watched her flourish in those moments. In that moment I fell head over heels for the organizing because for the first time I truly shared the passion and the excitement of my coworkers.

I'll never forget the time I spent at CABSS. Each experience was unique in its own way. Sign language is no longer a foreign language to me, it is a

representation of hope. I know first hand that the early intervention program is an amazing opportunity for the wonderful children that are able to work with the CABSS family. Whether my future leads me to working with the deaf community or not those few months will always hold a place in my heart.



Lidia Consiglio's experience, intern from George Brown College, Canada

In April of 2014 I had the pleasure and privilege to complete a 6-week internship at CABSS. In Toronto I had just finished my two years of studying to be a deafblind intervenor and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to expand my knowledge. From the moment I walked into the building I was welcomed with open arms. Stefania, Marta, Giusy and Laura all made me feel like I was a part of the team and valued what I had to say.

My experience during those 6 weeks really changed me and made me realize how hard the team at CABSS have been working and advocating for the rights of deaf and deafblind children for many years.

At CABSS the staff have dedicated their work to helping young children who are deafblind build a foundation for communication.

The children have the opportunity to explore in a multi sensory environment and also allows for parents to be a part of their child's learning. In Canada there are very limited resources for children of such a young age and it was refreshing to find that, in Italy, CABSS offers programs to children 0-6 years of age. Moreover, I think that parental involvement is very important

During my 6 weeks at CABSS I learned just how important it is to implement schedules for the children and really introduce them to object cues and touch cues. It is important for the child to feel secure enough to explore the world around them and allow everything to be accessible to them. I also learned that consistency is key, anything that is being done in the lab should be done also at home and that is why the parents are in the lab as well.

I really want to thank everyone at CABSS for being very welcoming and allowing me to observe and work with the students. I have learnt so many things that I never thought I would ever know or need to know, it has made me feel more comfortable when faced with situations in my job where I work with young children.



FUNDRAISING

Burraco tournament in favor of Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus

The annual Torneo di Burraco was held on May 21st at the magnificent Hotel Hassler and was organized by Associazione Piazza di Spagna and Trinità Dei Monti, presided by Roberto Wirth, and Associazione Via Condotti, presided by Gianni Battistoni.

The winners received a matching pair of watches kindly donated by Damiani. There was also a raffle at the end of the tournament with the proceeds going to CABSS Onlus.

CABSS would like to thank Tory Burch, Frette, Acqua di Parma, Versace, Angeletti and all boutiques that donated prizes to the raffle in support of the early intervention programs for children who are deaf at CABSS.



The 2014 Rome Marathon

This year, CABSS Onlus participated in the 2014 Rome Marathon and the Stracittadina.

The objective of this event was to raise money for the, "I Bambini Sordociechi e il Tatto: alla scoperta del mondo" program.

CABSS was supported by two runners: Giovanni La Mantia and Mukhtar Murtaza who completed the marathon with times of 03:48:50 and 04:19:11.



Touch is an important communication channel for children who are deafblind, a window to the world and a valuable instrument for psychophysical growth. For this reason, hands must be given the opportunity to: explore, search, grasp, gather information, relate and communicate. Hands must learn how to understand, integrate, express through various communication modalities such as Italian Tactile Sign Language.



Support CABSS by making a Tax Deductible Donation directly from the U.S.A.!

American citizens can now make a tax deductible donation to CABSS directly from the U.S.A. by taking advantage of tax deductions that support charities based in the U.S.A. (Sections 501 (c) (3) and 509 (a) (1) of the Internal Revenue Code).

This is possible due to the collaboration that CABSS has established with the **King Baudouin Foundation (KBFUS)** in New York, a well known charity in the world, which aims to offer citizens, companies and American foundations, the opportunity to express their generosity beyond the ocean, issuing a tax deductible receipt to donors.

Here's how you can support CABSS from the United States:

By making an **online donation** on the KBFUS website: www.kbfus.org and clicking on "Donate Now" and selecting "Giving Option 1: Non-Profit Partners Overseas" "Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children (IT)".

Sending a **cheque** to: KBFUS 10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10020. It is very important that you make sure to indicate in the memo section of the cheque that your donation is going to: "Friends of the Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children";

Through **wire transfer**. Please contact CABSS for more information.

KBFUS and CABSS both adhere to the values of integrity, transparency, respect for diversity and inclusion in the work that they do in improving the quality of life of the individuals that they support.



CABSS ONLUS

Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi

Support us!

Bank transfer made out to the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus, Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 – 00187 Roma.

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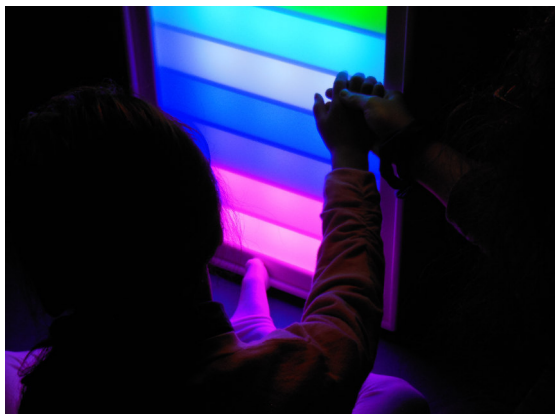
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Please indicate your name, address and telephone number on the transfer, so that we can send you a receipt.

Non-transferable check made out to the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus and sent to the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus, Via Nomentana 56 – 00161 Roma along with your information (name, surname, address and phone number).

Donate Online at our website: www.cabss.it.

PLEASE NOTE
Your donation is tax deductible!



FUNDRAISING

With your signature you can support CABSS by donating your 5x1000!

Supporting Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus is easy; make the decision to donate your 5x1000. You can allocate a portion of your income to a non-profit organization.

All you have to do is write down CABSS' tax code in the space provided and sign.

Remember that the 5x1000 does not replace the 8x1000 and you can donate to both. In the case that you decide not to donate be aware that the portion originally designated in favor of nonprofit organizations will go directly to the government.

Deaf and Deafblind Children need your support! Make the decision to donate your 5x1000 today!

TAX CODE 97350450587



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