

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

I would like to express how happy I am to publish this edition of the newsletter because it means we are still here! We have worked so hard for the past year and a half and during these last few months! All members of the Staff at CABSS have rolled up their sleeves to provide a safe learning environment for all deaf and deafblind children. It is not easy to carry on services in the middle of a world pandemic, it's not easy to manage on a daily basis in the midst of decrees that are constantly changing and move ahead without the possibility of organizing fundraising events that are crucial for CABSS to stay open.

Everyday, I feel very proud of my staff who welcome children to CABSS with a big smile hiding behind their transparent masks that often may make them lose their breath but not the love they have for the children! In the midst of the "storm" we were also able to open the doors to three new children, who were inserted in the early invention programs at CABSS thanks to donations from our American friends made through

the King Baudouin Foundation in the United States. A boy and two girls who will now share a part of their lives and walk hand in hand with the professionals at CABSS.

During the last few months, CABSS was involved again with the "+ ARIA - Inclusive Recreational Activities and Assistance to Children with CHARGE Syndrome", a CBM and Mondo Charge Project and provided consultation to 4 new families with children with CHARGE from 0 to 6 years.

In addition, the new Bilingual Storybook App for Deaf Children, "Capafiori", is finally online! The App, in Italian Sign Language (LIS) and Written Italian, was created thanks to the contribution from the Bank of Italy and tells the story of Boccio and Gemma, two Capafiori who each have a flower on their head that have not blossomed yet, who decide to go on an adventure which leads them to discovering the beauty of diversity.

CABSS was also very busy with the project "PER, Pensieri -

Emozioni - Relazioni tra Segni e Parole (Thoughts - Emotions - Relations between Signs and Words), an inclusive educational model". This initiative, was developed from an idea of CABSS Onlus and was carried out in collaboration with the ISS "A. Magarotto" school in Rome, the support of the Ministry of Education, Deaf educators, Deborah Donadio and Laura De Negri, and LIS (Italian Sign Language) consultation from Susanna Ricci Bitti. The project involved children from ISS' primary and secondary schools.

Finally, I would like to announce that the Italian Republic has recognized Italian Sign Language and Italian Tactile Sign Language! Italy is now aligned with all the other European countries that have already recognized their respective sign languages guaranteeing the right to deaf and deafblind people to services and the freedom to communication in their preferred language.

Kindest Regards!



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May 19th 2021: a historic day for deaf and deafblind communities!

On May 19th, 2021, the Italian Republic recognized Italian Sign Language (LIS) and Italian Tactile Sign Language (LIST)!

The process was a very long and complex one but now Italy is finally in accordance with the United Nations Convention on Disability, ratified in 2009, which establishes the accessibility and promotion of LIS for the inclusion of Deaf and Deafblind people. Furthermore, it aligned itself with all the other European countries that have already implemented, some even at the constitutional level, their respective sign languages.

Thanks to the recognition of Sign Language and Tactile Sign Language, Deaf and Deafblind people are guaranteed the right to services and given the freedom to communication in their preferred language.



The importance of total communication for deafblind children

Total communication is an approach that utilizes a combination of communication methods and modes. Each deafblind child is unique and the use of total communication allows each child the opportunity to identify the right combination of methods for him/her to be successful in accessing information and concepts. This approach also helps the child to form connections and actively interact with others by being able to exchange information and engage in conversations.

The Total Communication Approach can utilize a variety of communication methods and modalities such as:

- **Touch Cues**

A touch cue is a specific place on a child's body that is touched to convey information such as the direction of an upcoming event and provide feedback. An example of a touch cue is when you touch the ear of a child to indicate that they are about to listen to something.

- **Gestures**

A gesture is an intentional action or specific movement used to communicate. Gestures can be a valuable method of communication and can be a way for the learner to convey simple statements like "I'm finished" or "I want" or "I don't want that". Gestures can be simple and complex in nature.

- **Objects and Tactile Symbols**

Objects or tactile symbols are communication tools to build communication skills with students. Educators will commonly begin by using a concrete, whole object (known as an "object of reference") to represent an activity. When a student is familiar with the object and what it represents, educators can introduce a portion of the original object to mean the same thing. Tactile symbols are also used to represent more abstract concepts.

- **Pictures/Visual Systems**

Pictures or other visual systems such as photographs, line drawings, Mayer-Johnson Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) or Symbol Stix are some of the communication tools utilized with students who have residual vision.

- **Print**

Print or braille labels are used to label key areas and objects at home and in school environments for students who are learning print-based communication skills.

- **AT/AAC Low and High Tech**

Assistive Technology (AT) and/or Augmentative/Alternative Communication (AAC) devices can be helpful tools for students to develop speech and language skills. These devices range from low-tech single message systems to high-tech computer-based technology.



• **Speech/Voice**

Students who have the ability to use speech or other vocalizations to communicate with others. A students' speaking abilities can range from a simple vocalization, saying a word to full sentences. Speech is often modeled alongside other communication methods.

• **Sign Language**

Sign language is a formal language that uses the visual-gestural modality, unlike spoken language, which uses the acoustic-vocal channel. There are several sign languages used worldwide and each has its own grammatical structure that does not depend on the spoken language of the country in which it is used. A sign can be utilize on its own or in combination with the word for children who have specialized sensory and communication needs.

• **Tactile Sign Language**

For some students who have limited vision and hearing tactile signing is used to allow them to feel the sign and better understand what is being conveyed.

Children are encouraged to sign at a young age and signing abilities can range from approximations, production of single signs to the formation of three - sign and full sentences.

Educators and families may utilize tactile strategies such as:

◇ Tactile modeling where they demonstrate an activity by having the child feel their actions by touching parts of the body or objects involved in the action. This allow the child to receive information about an activity or action in a way that the child can perceive it tactilely.

◇ Mutual tactile attention is when you engage in joint attention and sharing an activity or object through non-controlling mutual touch. It provides a means of communicative reciprocity between the child and a communication partner. Mutual tactile attention encourages the child's involvement in social interactions.

◇ "Hand - under - hand" approach to interactions involves you placing your hands underneath a child's hands to demonstrate something, follow the child's interests, or join with them as they explore objects and surroundings. It allows the child access to the ways people use their hands. The child can experience hands in relation to one another such as direction of movement, speed, amount of force, or tempo. It provides a child who is deafblind with spatial awareness through tactile experience. It stimulates curiosity about what's around them & increases motivation to do things for themselves, reducing passivity and dependence. If the child's hands are on top of the adult's hands, the child is intentionally making the choice of moving with that person's hands, thus engaging in active learning on their part. It also prepares the child for tactile signing in the future by teaching the child that he/she has to reach out for communication.

Most children with deaf-blindness have some residual hearing and vision. To enhance learning, tactile learning strategies are paired with other approaches that incorporate the other senses (e.g., smell, taste, proprioception) which reinforces the concept of total communication by providing the child with access to range of communicative modalities and strategies where he/she can choose from and meet his/her individualized communication and learning needs.



The hands of a child who is deafblind and an intervenor at CABSS

Source:

<https://www.perkins.org/school/day-residential/deafblind/total-communication>

Monaco, C; & Ramey, C. (2014) Deafblindness. Intervenor Program, George Brown College

Volterra V. (a cura di), La lingua dei segni italiana. La comunicazione visivo-gestuale dei sordi, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1987



Exemples of some communication modalities

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

"I Capafiori", a journey of growth with the friendly protagonists from the new CABSS Storybook App

"I Capafiori" is the new CABSS Bilingual Storybook App, in Italian Sign Language (LIS) and Italian Written Language, aimed at deaf and hearing children aged 3 and over and available free of charge on the App Store (Apple) for Ipad.

In the fantastic country of Fiorilandia live the Capafiori, special plants that have flowers on their heads. The protagonists, Gemma and Boccio,lo,



An image with the title of the App

are two plants that have not blossomed yet and live on an island surrounded by flowers that like to show off their colorful petals and diffuse their beautiful fragrances. Feeling out of place because they never bloom, the two friends decide to leave by embarking on an adventurous journey which will lead them to discovering the beauty of diversity.

"I Capafiori" App has been shown to be a great communication tool. It is a storybook App which is aligned with recent studies on bilingualism and visual learning. Thanks to the visual narrative form, **children can choose to watch the story in LIS (Italian Sign Language) or read it in Italian.** In addition, they can access a **glossary with 150 clickable words**, each of which is linked to a video containing the spelling of the word and the corresponding LIS

sign. The storybook App aims to facilitate the deaf child's **approach to reading** by enriching his or her wealth of knowledge and expanding his/her vocabulary in LIS and in Italian. "I Capafiori" is also suitable for hearing children who will derive many benefits in terms of personal growth and learning by learning LIS and new ways of telling a story.

The Storybook App was created by CABSS as part of the project: "The Fantastic Factory of Stories. Sign and read with the new Storybook App in Italian Sign Language and Italian Written Language". The App was also created thanks to the contribution of the **Bank of Italy.**

Under the supervision of the Director of CABSS, Stefania Fadda, the production of "I Capafiori" involved a team of Deaf young professionals: Silvia Palmieri, Graphic and Visual Designer, former "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" Scholar, who created the story and illustrations which were an imaginative explosion of colors and shapes, in a fresh and captivating style, able to stimulate the curiosity of little ones and capture their attention; Susanna Ricci Bitti, also a former "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" Scholar, LIS (Italian Sign Language) and theoretical teacher on the History and the Culture of the Deaf edited the adaptation of the App in LIS together with Nicola della Maggiora, a Deaf Actor who works both

in theatre and television. In the App he tells the story of "I Capafiori" in LIS (Italian Sign Language), impersonating the various protagonists.

Finally, during the video shooting at the Eyes Made studio, the direction was handled by Deborah Donadio, Cinematographic Italian Sign Language (LIS) Coach.

The technical development of the "I Capafiori" App took place using the VL2 Storybook Creator (Motion Light Lab, Gallaudet University, Washington DC, USA). The acronym VL2 refers to Visual Learning and Visual Language (Sign Language and Written Language).

....And it doesn't stop here, CABSS and the Fantastic Story Factory are already thinking about another new colorful and fun story!



A scene from the "Read" section of the StoryBook App



Project PER, Pensieri, Emozioni e Relazioni tra Segni e Parole (Thoughts, Emotions and Relationships between Signs and Words). An inclusive educational model

The initiative of the project came from an idea that CABSS Onlus had and it was carried out with the collaboration of **ISS “A. Magarotto”** in Rome and the support of the **Ministry of Education**, who selected the PER project as part of their "Financial interventions to combat educational poverty" initiative. The

children and young people who during the long period of distance learning (DAD) risked or suffered an educational and cultural impoverishment which, in the most fragile cases, led to an increase in school dropout. The "return to normality" after the quarantine also represented another big change when children went back to school. Young people had to deal with new rules, spaces organized differently and different ways of interacting with each other to what they were used to.

The PER Project paid particular attention to the most at risk children and young people and was inspired by two fundamental principles: 1) no one should be left behind, as confirmed by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; 2) respect for equality, freedom and dignity of all human beings, as the only way towards a truly inclusive society, reaffirmed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

laborated with each other and, together, understood the importance of building positive relationships for the common good, especially in moments of great difficulty for everyone like the one we are still experiencing due to the crisis. During the PER Project children learned about relationships and were taught about mutual respect and rules, and how our way of thinking and experiencing emotions influence the relationships we have with others. Children also learned about how their thoughts affect their emotions which then forms behaviors that guide our relationships with others.... PER: Thoughts - Emotions - Relationships.

At the end of the project, all students received USB flash drives with the materials that were created during the course to share with their parents. In addition, educational videos were made, in LIS, (Italian Sign Language) where Deborah Donadio and Laura De Negri presented the main topics covered during the project. These videos will be available to all children and young people aged 6 to 14, deaf and hard of hearing, as well as students and families of ISS “A. Magarotto” in Rome in the future (currently being processed at the moment).

Once a week, Workshops in Italian Sign Language and Written Italian were held within the classrooms, led by the LIS (Italian Sign Language) educators, on the following topics: Education for Emotions, recognizing them and finding together ways, words and signs to express them; Education in solidarity, respect for others, against discrimination and bullying; Education in respecting the rules, also with reference to the current situation due to the spread of COVID - 19; Education in respecting common goods.

The workshops turned out to be real inclusive spaces where children and adults utilized LIS to express thoughts and emotions, col-

We would like to thank the Scholastic Director of ISS “A. Magarotto” in Rome, **Isabella Pinto**, for having accepted the project, the Head of S.M.S. Central, **Marianna Pardi**, the Head of the Nomentana I.C. primary and S.M.S. branch, **Lucrezia Di Gregorio**, and all school personnel, for their collaboration on the project.

For more information and to access the videos please visit: www.progetto-per.org



Some children involved in PER project

project began in February 2021 and ran until the end of the school year and involved the students from the integrated classes of “T. Silvestri”’s primary schools and upper secondary school students from “SMS Fabriani” of ISS “A. Magarotto”.

CABSS developed the PER Project in order to help deaf and hearing students, aged 6 to 14, to recover any loss they experienced in the educational, emotional and socio-relational areas, as a result of the COVID - 19 crisis. All work was done under the scientific responsibility of the director of CABSS, Stefania Fadda. The project was carried out by two qualified deaf educators, Deborah Donadio and Laura De Negri, and exceptional LIS (Italian Sign Language) consultant, Susanna Ricci Bitti.

2020 was a difficult year for everyone, the pandemic changed our way of living, relationships, routines, with negative repercussions especially on children and young people. According to research conducted during the pandemic, there are many



The PER project team - from left - Stefania Fadda, Deborah Donadio, Susanna Ricci Bitti and Laura De Negri

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

The involvement of CABSS in the continuation of the “+ Aria” project

The project "+ ARIA: Inclusive Recreational Activities and Assistance to children with CHARGE syndrome" - part 3 - is a continuation of the project carried out last summer to allow 4 other families with children with CHARGE Syndrome to benefit from recreational



A child with CHARGE Syndrome

and educational services and rehabilitation with educators, speech therapists and other experienced therapists or at centers, allowing children be involved

in services that promoted learning and development.

CABSS was one of the specialized centers that were involved in the project carried out by **CBM Italia Onlus**, in partnership with **Mondo CHARGE**.

CBM Italia Onlus is a humanitarian organization committed to the prevention and treatment of blindness and the inclusion of people with disabilities in developing countries and in Italy.

Mondo CHARGE is the first association in Italy dedicated to CHARGE Syndrome, founded by individuals with CHARGE Syndrome and their families. Its main objective is to support and improve the quality of life of people with CHARGE Syndrome, creating a network of communication and exchange of information among its members, the CHARGE community (individuals with CHARGE, families, relatives, friends), and social health workers.

The COVID - 19 health crisis that broke out in March 2020 and continued into 2021 made it difficult for children with CHARGE Syndrome

to resume their daily routines posing a high risk of slowing down or interrupting their learning and general growth and development. The reality they are experiencing today involves further changes different to those they have already experienced during the lockdown. Each child has had to readjust to this new reality in different environmental contexts such as therapeutic, school and community settings. Children with CHARGE Syndrome have developed new needs related to communication, understanding of information, controlling anxiety and behaviors.

During this delicate phase CABSS worked hard to ensure that little ones were adequately supported to adapt to their "new life" by respecting their personalized needs and processing time. In addition, the experts at CABSS supported families and educators by giving consultation on how to lower their anxiety levels, how to manage stereotypical behaviors or deal with the appearance of new behaviors.

Three new children join the CABSS family

Thanks to the generous donations of our American supporters, we were able to include three new children into our early intervention programs.

After the initial assessment phase, each child will have the opportunity to take advantage of a fully specialized program planned according to their needs.

Thanks to charitable foundation at the King Baudouin Foundation United States (KBFUS) CABSS will be able to support children in the multisensory laboratory but will also have the opportunity to support families with deaf and deafblind children unable to move around due to the situation caused by the pandemic.

Although in Italy the vaccination plan is proceeding fairly quickly, the pandemic has not yet been overcome and this situation often forces the

government to adopt restrictive measures to reduce the incidence of infections. Social distancing and the adoption of all preventive measures, both at home and at school, are still in force, negatively affecting deafblind children.

The daily routine is important for children because it offers a point of reference that allows them to anticipate what is going to happen which helps them to have a sense of security and control over their surrounding environment.

With the disruption of daily life, and with the absence of specialized services and professionals, deafblind children risk isolation from the outside world and developing problematic behaviors.

CABSS early intervention programs are aimed at this point to support deaf and deafblind children so that they are better prepared to face the obstacles and problems that arise due to the Covid - 19 emergency.



FUNDRAISING

Donate your 5X1000 to CABSS, donate love!

Choosing to allocate your 5X1000 to CABSS means:

Donating love. To help us support, educate and make deaf and deafblind children smile.

Making the right move. 5X1000 helps us to offer, free of charge, personalized early intervention programs and all the tools that allow children to: access information, develop concepts and skills, communicate, establish meaningful relationships with others and achieve a positive quality of life.

Making a gesture of immense value. 5X1000 allows us to reach out to more families with deaf and deafblind children, improve our early intervention programs, carry out psycho-educational and inclusive projects (including projects at schools), conduct research, produce informative materials and organize events to raise awareness in the community.

It just takes one signature to help CABSS and deaf and deafblind children to do great things!

In the box "Scelta della destinazione del 5 per mille dell'Irpef" on the tax return form (modello "Redditi Persone Fisiche", "modello 730", attached to the "Certificazione Unica"), it is necessary to:

- **Sign** in the space dedicated to "Sostegno del volontariato e delle altre organizzazioni non lucrative di utilità sociale"
- Indicate our *codice fiscale* (tax code) **97350450587**.

Those who are exempt from submit a tax return can also donate their 5X1000. Using the appropriate form "Certificazione Unica" attached provided by your employer or the pension provider, it is necessary to:

- **Sign** and write CABSS *codice fiscale* **97350450587** in the box "Sostegno del volontariato e delle altre organizzazioni non lucrative di utilità sociale";

- Insert the form in a sealed envelope and write **DESTINAZIONE CINQUE PER MILLE IRPEF**, please indicate your surname, name and *codice fiscale*;

- **Take** the envelope to the post office which will be mail out for you free of charge to the Financial Administrative office, or you can take it to any authorized office that can send via telematic transmission (ie; professional, Caf, etc.).



Charitable donations in last will and testament... leave the future of deaf and deafblind children in good hands

There are many and different ways in which you can support CABSS Onlus so that deaf and deafblind children have all the tools for healthy growth and development. One of the ways to can help is by choosing to give a charitable donation in your last will and testament.

A will is a free and personal act by which anyone can choose to leave all or part of their possessions (Article 587 of the Civil Code). It can become an act of solidarity if it is decided to appoint CABSS among the beneficiaries. In this case, the **charitable act will not take anything away from loved ones and legitimate heirs.** The law, in fact, establishes the legitimate shares of succession and CABSS can be among the beneficiaries in which the individual can freely decide to leave his/her assets to.

You can make a will at any time by choosing from three types of equal value:

- **holographic testament:** it is drawn up by hand by the individual. This is the simplest form of a will because the presence of a notary or witnesses is not required

- **public testament:** drawn up by the notary, based on the wishes of the individual, in presence of the notary and two witnesses

- **secret testament:** it is confidential in nature. It is delivered sealed by the individual to the notary, in the presence of two witnesses

Each of these wills are effective and valid only at the time of succession, as long as you are alive, it is not binding: it can be modified or revoked at any time.

Making your will an act of solidarity in favor of deaf and deafblind children does not require large sums of money and precious goods. You can make a difference even with a small contribution, and what is left to CABSS is not subject to tax.

To request our guide to charitable donations in last will and testaments please contact us at: info@cabss.it.



FUNDRAISING

Support us!

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

Banca CREDEM

IBAN: IT91 J 03032 03201 010000004258

BIC/SWIFT: BACRIT21318

Non-transferable check made out 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: eng.cabss.it.

PLEASE NOTE

Your donation is tax deductible!

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

By making an **online donation** on the KFBUS website: www.kbfus.org and clicking on "Donate" and under the letter "A" look for "Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children (IT)".

Sending a **check** made out to KBFUS and sent to KBFUS at 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 check that your donation is going to: "Friends of the Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children".

For more information please visit:

www.kbfus.org

eng.cabss.org



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A moment during a therapeutic session at CABSS



Purchase your copy today!

A portion of the proceeds from the sales of the book will go to CABSS Onlus in favor of deaf and deafblind children

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Via Nomentana 56 - 00161 Roma

Tel. 06 89561038 / Fax 06 89561040 / Mob. 331 8520534

www.cabss.org

E-mail: info@cabss.it

Tax Number: 97350450587

Director: Giustino Ruggieri

Editor: Stefania Fadda

Writers: Giusy Caravello, Marta Cidronelli, Laura Harripersad

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