

Right on target

CABSS ONLUS newsletter

Dear readers

This edition of "Right on Target" focuses on the many conferences that The Center of Assistance for Deaf and Deafblind Children Onlus (CABSS) has participated in over the last few months such as our conference on "Childhood and Deafness: The Perspective of Deaf Professionals" that was organized to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Roberto Wirth Scholarship. Dr. Stefania Fadda and some of the staff at CABSS also had the opportunity to participate in various international conferences with great success.

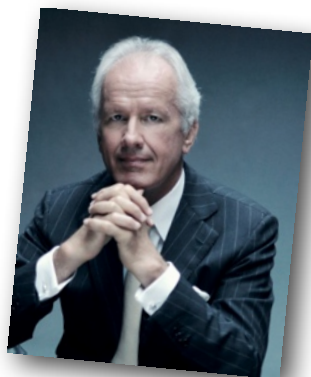
It's our pleasure to announce our new collaboration with Soggiorno Sereno Onlus-Sandro Gabbani, which will give parents of children who are deaf or deafblind who live outside Rome the possibility of acquiring housing for short stays, free of charge (contact us for more information). We are delighted with this collaboration because it has allowed us to take another big step ahead in supporting deaf and deafblind children.

Before I go, I would like to take this opportunity to say farewell to our Fulbright Scholar, Rachel Heuston, who has spent 6 months with us deepening her studies in the area of deafblindness and who will take the new knowledge she has gained in Italy back with her to the United States. You can read more about her experience at CABSS in this issue.

Enjoy!



Roberto E. Wirth



President Wirth winner of DeafNation 2012

On the 30th of July, our president, Roberto Wirth, was given the DeafNation Inspiration Award 2012 for "Hotel Hospitality". "My objective in life has always been the constant drive for perfection" declared the noted Roman hotelier who for years has been very active in the Deaf community both in Italy and abroad.



Other winners of the DeafNation Inspiration Award for 2012 included: Adam Kosa for "Politics"; Braam Jordaan for "Visual Arts"; Marilyn Jean Smith and Nickson Kakiri for "Advocacy"; Sean Berdy for "Entertainment"; Tai Lihua for "Performing Arts" and T. Alan Hurwitz for "Higher Education".

The DeafNation Expo is a touring trade show for, by, and about deaf people. It provides exhibitions and entertainment around the United States free of charge. The DeafNation Expo began in 2003, starting with 6 Expos. Today, DeafNation hosts 10-15 Expos annually, attracting more than 600,000 attendees.





Scientific articles

Childhood Deafness according to Deaf Professionals: 20th Anniversary of the “Roberto Wirth” Scholarship

This year marked the 20th year anniversary of the “Roberto Wirth” Scholarship. The scholarship was created by Roberto Wirth in 1992 and has given young Italian Deaf individuals the opportunity to study in the United States at the prestigious Gallaudet University in Washington D.C.

CABSS and President Roberto Wirth celebrated the anniversary of the scholarship on May 11th and 12th in Rome. The celebration opened with a round table discussion reserved only to former “Roberto Wirth” scholars. The scholars were warmly welcomed by Dr. Wirth and Dr. Lynne Murray, Vice President of Gallaudet University who came to Italy just to join in the celebration. Enthusiastic scholars discussed the issues relative to childhood deafness in Italy.

On the 12th of May, a national conference was held on “Childhood and Deafness: The Perspective of Deaf Professionals”. All presenters consisted of past “Roberto Wirth” scholars and presentations were centered on educational, communicative-linguistic and

socio-emotive modalities that favored positive development in deaf children through the application of avant-garde methods and techniques diffused in the United States.

“During the past 20 years - explained Roberto Wirth - many brilliant young deaf individuals had the opportunity to study in the United States and once they returned home, put in practice their knowledge for the benefit of deaf Italian children. Every former scholar is a valued professional in the area of childhood deafness and their presence, as the protagonists at this conference for me, is a great source of pride”.



Lynne Murray, Vice President of Gallaudet University

Dr. Murray also affirmed that “Gallaudet University trains students to be able to use their

knowledge to be able to adapt to changes in the world”.

“In Italy, deafness affects one out of a thousand children under the age of 3. Among children in Neonatal Emergency and in Pediatric Intensive Care, the incidence of deafness is ten times higher - sustains Professor Corrado Moretti, head physician of the Pediatric Emergency ward of Policlinico Umberto I of Rome - about one or two out of every hundred babies born”.

Stefania Fadda, a psychologist specialized in Deafness and the director of CABSS states that, “mental health is not only physical but also psychological that requires the collaboration of professionals trained in the area of education and psychology. When educating children who are deaf, it is also valuable to have educators who are deaf because they can truly understand and anticipate the needs of the children”.

The conference opened with a presentation about the benefits of the “Roberto Wirth” Scholarship to develop and raise awareness of educational methods that are adapted to meet the specialized needs of Deaf Italian children. (“The benefits of the” Roberto Wirth, scholarship for Deaf Italian children”, Claudio Baj, former 1995/1996 “Roberto Wirth” scholar).

The first step in understanding children who are deaf is activating early communication

with parents who are hearing. (“Expressive communication in deaf and hearing children”, Giuseppina di Nardo, former 1997/1998 “Roberto Wirth” scholar).

Parents can learn effective communication methods with their child, for example at the Parent Infant Program in the U.S. where parents have the opportunity to be directly involved in specialized activities for children who are deaf, 0-3 years of age. All activities



are created and carried out by a deaf and a hearing teacher. (“Early Intervention, 0-3 years of age: Parent Infant Program”, Vincenzo Speranza, former 2009/2010 “Roberto Wirth” scholar).

When we speak about effective communication methods between hearing parents and their deaf child, we often refer to the use of Italian Sign Language. Deaf children, who are exposed to sign language from the first months of life, demonstrate that sign language can reinforce verbal language learning (“The Acquisition of LIS (Italian Sign Language) in deaf children”, Tiziana Gulli, former 2005/2006 “Roberto Wirth” scholar”).



As the deaf child grows there is a need to interact effectively with his/her hearing peers, especially at school. Bilingual education (Italian and LIS) can play a role in facilitating communication between deaf and hearing children ("The Experience of Bilingualism in Teaching", Daniele Chiri, former 1993/1994 "Roberto Wirth" scholar).

Bilingual education can be incorporated into a number of subject areas for example, in the area of art. The combination of art and bilingualism strengthens the deaf child's cognitive ability, abstraction skills, ability to make meaning of the surrounding world, and his/her socio-relational skills ("Artistic Education for deaf children," Carlo di Biase, former 2004/2005 "Roberto Wirth" scholar).

Extracurricular programs that include music, art, and exposure to many different and new experiences can provide opportunities for communicative exchange, social interaction between deaf and hearing children and provide multisensory stimulation that act to develop all senses.

("Integration strategies for deaf and hearing children," Simona Trani, former 2003/2004 "Roberto Wirth" scholar).

Play is fundamental to healthy development. For children, to play is to live. They love to play but it doesn't end in childhood, play is enjoyed by all ages. Participation and involvement in games can create learning opportunities. In the U.S. educators pay particular attention to the creation of games, utilized at school and home, that favor the development of communicative-linguistic skills in deaf children ("Bilingual games: technologies to support successful development of the deaf child." (Fiorinda Maria Pino, former 2011/2012 "Roberto Wirth" scholar).

In 2012, CABSS participated in national and international conferences dedicated to sensory disability

Nicosia (Cyprus): "Approach and Avant-garde Methods in Rehabilitation and Education of Deaf Children"

The conference was held on the 5th and 6th of May at the University of Nicosia and was promoted by "'Omilos Filon Ton Kofon" ("Deaf Friends"), an organization in Cyprus,



Stefania Fadda, Director CABSS Onlus

in collaboration with the Department of Otolaryngology at the Nicosia General Hospital and the School for the Deaf. Internationally renowned presenters spoke about research done in the area of education for deaf children.

Discussions included: Means of Music Expression and Aesthetic Experiences for Deaf Children and Hard-of-Hearing Children (Dr. Alice Ann Darrow, U.S.A.); Cochlear Implantation from Hair Cells to Speech Development – The Journey (Dr. Thomas Nikolopoulos, Greece); Song Signing, Singing and Instrumental Play as Medium for Language Learning and Musical Expression in Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children (Dr. Maria Yennari Cipro, Greece, and Alice Ann Darrow, U.S.A.); Strategies for Developing Reading and Writing Skills in Children with Hearing Loss (Dr. Linda Spencer, USA); More than Words: The Importance of Pragmatic Development for Deaf Children (Dr. Lyndsey Allen, UK). Dr. Stefania Fadda, the director of CABSS, presented on the “Prevalence and Correlates of Mental Health Problems in Deaf Children, Adolescents, and Adults: Implications for Day to Day Practice” and “Socioemotional and Cognitive Development in Deaf Children and Adolescents”.

Bad Ischl (Austria): “1st International Congress on family-centred early intervention for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing”

The congress brought together researchers and professionals in the area of family-centred early intervention with the main objective of improving national early intervention programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.



*Jan van Dijk, expert in deafblindness,
and Rachel Heuston, Fulbright scholar*

CABSS contributed a poster entitled, “Early Intervention Programs for Italian Deafblind Children: A Multisensory Approach” (S.Fadda, L.Harripersad & R.Heuston, 2012), that was represented at the conference by Dr. Rachel Heuston, CABSS American Fulbright Intern.

The poster was dedicated to the “Comunicare Con-Tatto” project that offers early intervention programs to deafblind children 0-6 years of age. The authors describe the results during the first year of the project (November 2010-December 2011) by analyzing the following aspects: the multisensory approach, assessment of children who are deafblind, parental participation and support, consultation and training of professional figures who work with children who are deafblind in various settings outside of CABSS.

Cernobbio (CO): NHS 2012 - Beyond newborn hearing screening. Infant and childhood hearing in science and clinical practice

The congress was held on the 5-7th of June at the Centro Congressi Villa Erba, at beautiful Lake Como and brought together specialists in audiology, otolaryngology, neuroscience, neurology, psychology, communication disorders and other related fields. The congress gave an international and multidisciplinary forum to speak about childhood deafness.

In the last ten years, important developments in the area of technology offered many solutions for deaf children and presented new challenges for professionals in the area of screening, assessment and high quality early intervention services.

Dr.Fadda represented CABSS with a poster entitled "Psychosocial Development of Deaf Children with Cochlear Implants" (S. Fadda, 2012), a overview of recent literature relative to children who have been implanted and their development in the following areas: selective attention, sharing, problem solving, symbolic play, communication, academics, socio-relational, identity and quality of life.

The poster also spoke about parental reaction to the diagnosis, parental stress, parental expectations to the cochlear implant and coping strategies.

Corbiolo di Bosco Chiesanuova (VR): "Models of educational services and social rehabilitation for blind individuals with additional disabilities"

Organized by Fondazione MAC together with Movimento Apostolico Ciechi (MAC). For years, both organizations have been dedicated to supporting individuals who are blind and blind with additional disabilities. The seminar was held on the 24-26th of June at the Centro di Formazione e Vacanza "T.Fusetti". The objectives of this initiative was to communicate the results of national research done after services in education and social rehabilitation were provided to blind individuals with additional disabilities and to provide an opportunity for organizations to present their program, share their reflections and prospective for the future. All organizations had a central focus on the individual, family and community even though they were not necessarily viewed in the same way.

Dr. Giusy Caravello, responsible for project task development at CABSS presented a report on "Deafblind Children: Multisensory Early Intervention" (S.Fadda, G. Caravello, M. Cidronelli, L. Harripersad; 2012).





Activities and projects

Comunicare Con-Tatto: Early intervention for Deafblind Children

December 31st, 2011 concluded the first phase of the "Comunicare Con-Tatto" project that provided early intervention programs for deafblind children, 0-6 years old and was made possible due to the contribution from Fondazione Rome-Terzo Settore. We have seen many results in the majority of children attending the program in the areas of communication, ability to attend to light and sound stimuli and interaction with others. Parents reported a decrease level of stress, an increased understanding in the area of deafblindness and feelings of competency in communicating with their child.

These results have encouraged CABSS to present the project at national and international conferences: Tenerife (Spain), October 2011; Bad Ischl (Austria), May 2012 e Corbiolo di Bosco Chiesanuova (Vr), June 2012 and go ahead with the project next year.

Rachel Heuston: My experience as a Fulbright Scholar at CABSS

During my time as a Fulbright Scholar in Rome, Italy (January-June 2012), I had the pleasure of working with CABSS to support teachers and families of deafblind children.

One of the main areas that I was able to support families was by using the Van Dijk Guide to Assessment with each child in the deafblind program. Through the assessment process, the team at CABSS and the parents were able to gain a better understanding of the way their children function in the areas of communication, social skills, problem solving, and memory. This information was helpful in order to determine the next steps of development and growth for the children.

Working with teachers of children who are deafblind was also an important part of my time at CABSS. Alongside the Intervenor at CABSS, I was able to help develop an educational program for a child who is deafblind that was implemented at school. Last, I had the honor of representing CABSS Onlus during a poster session at the first international conference on Family Centered Early Intervention for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Bad Ischl, Austria.

Fundraising

Swan Tour and Charity Golf Tournament in support of CABSS

On April 15th, 2012, the 2012 Swan Tour was held at the luxuriant Marco Simone Golf Club. This tournament was a charity event dedicated to CABSS where each participant had the possibility of participating in a raffle and winning fantastic prizes. The money raised by the raffle went to support the many projects at CABSS.

Despite the rain, many golfers participated and showed their support! This tournament was made possible by Mr Giorgio Lucchetti of G&G Sport, a dear friend of CABSS Onlus.

All the staff at CABSS would like to thank all the golfers who participated in the tournament and Mr Lucchetti for his generous contribution in supporting our activities with deaf and deafblind children.



How to support us!

Donate online at our website: www.cabss.it

Bank transfer made out to:

Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi ONLUS

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Please indicate your name, address and telephone number on the transfer.

REMEMBER

Your donation is tax deductible!

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