

right on target

Roberto Wirth Fund newsletter

Dear Readers,

RWF began 2010 with a flurry of ideas and enthusiasm, and with lots of news for deaf and deafblind children and their families.

"Right on Target" is now in its 6th edition and always rich with news: in this edition, you will have the opportunity to learn about congenital deafblindness and how quality of life for deafblind children can improve through tactile education. This is the direction the RWF is working towards.

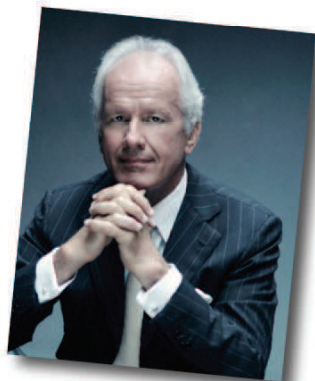
Please continue to support us! Look at the end of this newsletter or visit our website, www.robertowirthfund.net, to see the various ways you can donate. On our website you will also see how your donations are being used. I would like to remind you that it is also possible to support RWF through 5x1000.

Before leaving you to read the newsletter, I would like to share wonderful news. Last February we saw A Sense of Wirth (ASOW), my new association in New York, officially begin activities. ASOW will provide support to deaf and deafblind children and their families in the U.S., just as the RWF strives to do in Italy. I wish Joseph Fischgrund, the Executive Director, Jacqueline Roth, the Marketing Director, their staff and the Board great success in the future.

Enjoy!



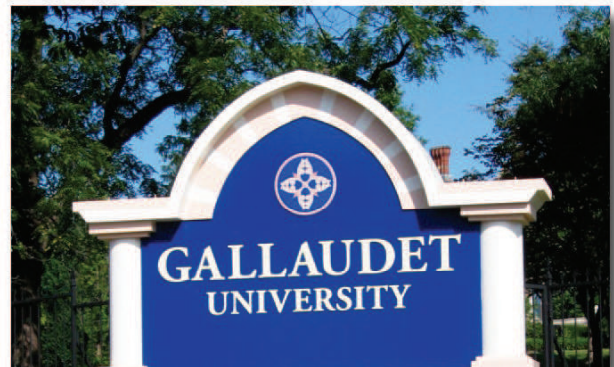
Roberto E. Wirth
President



Roberto Wirth Fund and the Fulbright Commission for deaf children

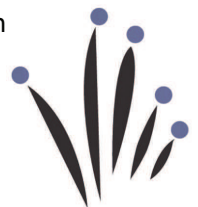
Since 1992, in cooperation with the Fulbright Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange between Italy and United States, the Roberto Wirth Fund awards the "Roberto Wirth" scholarship to Italian deaf citizens. For one year, the winner has the opportunity to expand his/her studies at Gallaudet University in Washington DC, the world leader in liberal education and career development for deaf and hard of hearing students.

The 2010-2011 scholarship presents some differences compared to the past scholarships: in addition to taking courses in Early Childhood Education, there is the possibility to take courses in Psychology and Counseling. The goal is to train highly skilled professionals that, upon their return to Italy, will be able to work with deaf children from birth to diagnosis and during rehabilitation or habilitation until they attend school.



All "Roberto Wirth" scholarship alumni return to Italy enthusiastic about their experience and eager to use the skills acquired during their year at Gallaudet University.

The winner of the Roberto Wirth 2009-2010 scholarship was Vincenzo Speranza, who has expanded his studies in education. Vincenzo commented on his study experience in States as "the best and most unforgettable time of my life."





Activities and projects

The Baths of Ancient Rome come alive in Cossato

Last December marked the conclusion of the second module of the arts education project that RWF has supported over many years – the result of the work of art experts and, deaf educators, both Italian and foreign.

"The Baths of Ancient Rome" is the name of the second module carried out at the preschool and primary school of the city of Cossato (Bi), involving children aged 5 and those in the 1st and 2nd grade classes.

Carlo di Biase, art expert and deaf educator, with the help of an assistant deaf teacher Valentina Bani, prepared each lesson in detail, addressing both theory and practice using slides, photos, images and materials for the students to construct and to assemble. The first lesson saw the children try their hand at producing a garment which would allow them to enter the real environment of ancient Rome! The tunic was then worn in each class, except for the last class, in which the children had the chance to become real modern "archaeologists".

There were many activities: the writing technique of ancient Rome was explained to children through the reproduction of wax tablets used in ancient times; games of the past were analyzed; students create ball of cloth; and the practice of hygiene in ancient Rome was explained using Aleppo Soap.

At the end of the module, the children created a real aqueduct which carried water from their hands, the "spring source", to the spa pools. The trip to Acqui Terme proved highly educational in that it enabled each child have hands-on experience with what they had studied in class, which is the operation of the spa!

The eyes of the children, sometimes curious and attentive, sometimes doubtful and perplexed, instilled in the collaborators the desire to pass on their knowledge and to do their jobs with commitment and enthusiasm.





English / ASL Lab 2010

Also this year, RWF has produced the "English/ASL Language Lab", now in its third year, involving deaf and hearing elementary students at the School of Primary Learning Circle 173°, Rome.

The language laboratory is designed to support the regularly scheduled English classes held in the classroom with two teachers - one teacher uses spoken English with hearing students and the other teacher uses sign languages - ASL (American Sign Language) and LIS - with deaf students. The two teachers involved in the project are Nurit Roded who is a hearing mother-tongue speaker from New York City, in addition to Kate Groves, a deaf mother-tongue speaker from Detroit.

The lab allowed the students to learn English with native speaking teachers in a natural linguistic context using structured activities. A further objective of the "English / ASL Language Lab" was to provide specialized language support in classes where some students presented difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships with their peers.

During the three years of the "English/ASL Language Lab", students have demonstrated their motivation to learn English and to utilize the language in and out of the classroom. The deaf students learning a new language have become more comfortable with the language learning process and have improved their competence in communicating effectively with the world around them.



Project on the psychosocial development of deaf and hearing children who attend integrated classes

In collaboration with the State Institute of specialization for the Deaf in Rome, RWF is supporting a research project involving Dr Stefania Fadda, psychologist and director, on the psychosocial development of deaf and hearing children who attend integrated classes. The research is being carried out in Italian and Italian Sign Language (LIS).



Psycho-social development is the process by which the child becomes a socially responsible individual, able to use personal and environmental resources to adapt to various situations. This process begins at birth and is strongly influenced by the relational contexts in which the child is situated. Parents and teachers are active participants in the process of the child's development.

Recent theories have outlined the importance of ambient factors in the psychosocial development of the deaf child. In particular, studies that have investigated the factors influencing academic success have identified them as factors relative to: the child (age of hearing loss, grade of deafness, presence of other disability, use of hearing aids, etc.), the school (type of communication used, early intervention, etc.), and the family (socio-economic status, family composition, type of communication used, etc.).



Scientific articles

Congenital deafblindness: a pedagogical challenge

Congenital deafblind refers to a very particular condition in which one has a total or partial lack of sensory input (vision and hearing). Such senses support our ability to understand and interact with the environment around us and they implicitly allow us to search for and maintain communication with other people.

However, if significant perceptual deficiencies represent an obstacle for communicative/social behaviours, at the same time those deficiencies can be bridged through a not simple but possible educational course.

Sight and hearing inform us about most of the things that happen around us, but we often underestimate the power of those senses, wrongly called minor, such as: taste, smell and touch.

Indeed, touch, if taught early enough, can represent the deafblind child's window to the world. Helen Keller, deafblind since the age of 19 months, says: "In large measure we travel the same highways, read the same books, speak the same language, yet our experiences are different. All my comings and goings turn on the hands as on a pivot. It is the hand that binds me to the world." (H. Keller, 1923).

Indeed, for the deafblind child, touch is a communicative and relational bridge which is indispensable for his or her psychophysical growth. There are various communicative touching forms, depending on deafblind child's needs and capabilities (eg: object communication and tactile sign language). Yet, the touching skills acquired for communicative function must be preceded by a more general touching education. In cases where

we cannot rely on view and hearing, hands must take on several tasks: to acquire an explorative competence; to help the child on reaching a secure sense of object permanence and, consequently, motivation movement; to help the child on building a picture of his body and a perception of themselves in the world.

Barbara Miles, a specialist on deafblindness in children, underscores how, "The hands of the child who is deafblind must become curious, must learn to search, explore, reach and grasp, and must become able to express an increasingly wide range of feelings and ideas - all without the reinforcement that vision and hearing provide. [...] Without education of the hands (or without compensatory use of other avenues of information, in the cases where the use of hands is impossible), there will be no differentiation of self and world, no acquisition of language, and no cognitive development beyond the most elementary ideas." (B. Miles, 1998).

Deafblindness: towards recognition

The Chamber of Deputies is considering a law that recognizes deafblindness as "a specifically unique disability", apart from the sum of blindness and deafness.

On 22 September 2009, the legal text had been approved unanimously by the Senate Labour Committee, which has closed the gap in the area of recognition of the rights of deafblind people, already long since legislated in other European countries.



Elegance and solidarity for "Providing Opportunities with a Smile"

On Monday, 14 December, an auction was held in the marvellous halls of the Hotel Hassler in support of the Roberto Wirth Fund. The auction was coordinated by Mrs Marisela Tamraz Federici. The purpose of fundraising was to support psychological counselling services for deaf and deafblind children and their families.

The four keywords of the evening were: Smiles, Expression, Emotion and Happiness to exude an atmosphere in which deaf and hearing people are united under the banner of solidarity.

An amazing theatrical performance, "Three Matches and One Light", performed by deaf and hearing actors, started the evening continued with cocktails and concluded with a charity auction provided by the generous contributions of the prestigious Roman boutiques.

In a whirl of fantastic bags, incredible stoles, throws and shiny shoes, Marisela Federici magically involved a multitude of guests present including: Austrian Ambassador Christian Berlakovits, Maria Monsè, Roberto Angeletti, Elettra Marconi, Guglielmo Giovanelli Marconi, the director of research Virginia Volterra, and the young deaf director Emilio Insolera.

Our warm thanks go to the supportive organizations, sponsors and Honorary Committee: Roman Mayor Gianni Alemanno, the Ambassador of Austria, the Minister of the Swiss Embassy Mauro Reina, Ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci, Giampiero Ingrassia, Virginia Volterra, the Ambassador of Germany, Anna Kanakis, Marquise Flaminia Patrizi Montoro, President Ida Collu of ENS, Milly Carlucci, Countess Marilù Gaetani, and President Giovanni Petrucci of CONI.

Between snapshots and sparkling smiles, Angeletti for RWF

At Christmas, the historical Roman jeweller shop Angeletti has chosen to give a special gift to deaf and deafblind children, donating part of its proceeds to the RWF.

From December 1st to December 24th, customers who purchased their Christmas gifts at the jeweller shop on Via Condotti also contributed indirectly to support RWF programs and psychological services for children and their families.

The splendid initiative was inaugurated on December 1st at the jeweller shop, where the Angeletti family welcomed guests with an elegant cocktail and an exhibition of artistic photos taken by Alberta Cuccia and Margherita Tamraz Federici. The two artists have immortalized their shots with important Roman lords and ladies wearing the beautiful Angeletti jewels.

The people who kindly provided their support to this event are: Giovanna and Alessia Caruso Fendi, Esther Crimi, Emanuela Cuccia, Marisela Federici, Marilù Gaetani d'Aragona, Rosi Greco, Benedetta Lignani Marchesani, Elettra Marconi, Martine Orsini, Flaminia Patrizi Montoro, Melba Ruffo di Calabria, Claudia Ruspoli, Paola Severini, Guya Sospisio, Francesco Bellavista Caltagirone, Arturo and Francesco Salerni.

The prestigious brands photographed and displayed during the evening were: Chantecler, Pasquale Bruni, Crivelli, Marco Bicego, Blancpain, Santagostino and D Donna.

President Roberto Wirth thanked Angeletti Jewellers and its customers for the opportunity given to deaf and deafblind children.



Extend a hand to RWF: 5x1000 2010

Also this year you can designate your 5x1000 to us: a small gesture that has great meaning! Sign in the box on your tax return and write in our tax code # 97350450587.

Remember that you do not have to choose between the 8x1000 and 5x1000 IRPEF, you can choose both!

5x1000 is a percentage of your personal income tax (income tax) that, since 2006, each taxpayer can choose to allocate in support of: volunteer associations, non-profit organizations, social promotion associations, medical research, scientific research or universities.

In 2008 the largest percentage of these funds was allocated to non-profit and voluntary associations, which includes the RWF. We work for deaf and deafblind children and their families with enthusiasm and passion, and we take this opportunity to thank all our donors again for showing us their support, even with the 5x1000.

Add value to your 5x1000!

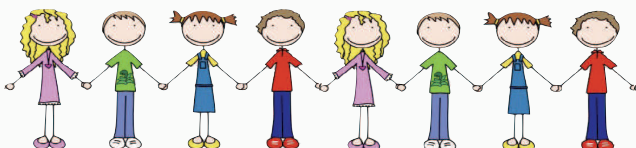


Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus

supporting deaf and deafblind children

On your tax return form please indicate

tax number 97350450587



A heartfelt thanks goes to all those who supported RWF through 5x1000 2009. Many of our projects for deaf and deafblind children have been achieved thanks to your signature!

How you can support us:

Donate online at our website:
www.robertowirthfund.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.

Postal checking account N° 88221536, made out to the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus, Via Nomentana 56 – 00161 Roma.

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

Remember - your donation is tax deductible!

**Quarterly Newsletter of the
Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus
No. 6 Spring/Summer 2010**

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Tel. 06 4182113 / Fax 06 4506671

Registration - Tribunale di Roma:
N° 498 del 07/11/2007