

# right on target

## Roberto Wirth Fund newsletter

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to open this issue of "Right on Target" by sharing with you some important news: The Rome Third Sector Foundation has chosen to help the Roberto Wirth Fund by supporting the "Communication Con-Tact" project for deafblind children 0 - 6 years and their families.

Among the activities that the Foundation will strive to achieve is to promote and support charity initiatives and social causes in the fields of Health, Education and Training, Arts and Culture, Scientific Research and Assistance to vulnerable social groups.

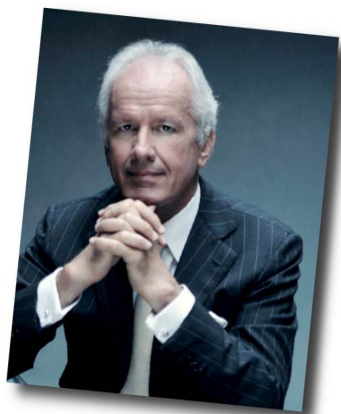
On behalf of the RWF staff, deafblind children who are currently benefitting from these individualized programs and myself, I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the Rome Third Sector Foundation for their valuable support.

Have you made your decision about donating to 5X1000? Please consider donating your 5x1000 to RWF, to support early intervention programs customized for deaf and deafblind children. For more information please see the article about the 5x1000 in this issue of our newsletter.

Enjoy!



Roberto E. Wirth  
President



## Fiorinda Maria Pino wins the "Roberto Wirth" Scholarship for 2011-2012 academic school year

Dr Roberto Wirth, President of the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus, and Dr Stefania Fadda, coordinator of the scholarship, are proud to announce the winner of the 2011-2012 "Roberto Wirth" scholarship, Fiorinda Maria Pino. The scholarship is administered in cooperation with the Fulbright Commission for cultural and academic exchange between Italy and the United States.

The "Roberto Wirth" scholarship is part of the Deafness Programme and allows the scholarship holder to take courses in Psychology, Counseling and Education in the area of Child Deafness. The courses also provide direct training at some schools for children (0-6 years of age) in Washington, D.C.



Fiorinda Maria Pino is a brilliant architecture student who wants to create specialized educational materials

for deaf children to stimulate learning through the use of interactive books of games in LIS and written Italian.

The winner will have the opportunity to study for one academic year in Washington D.C. in the U.S at the prestigious Gallaudet University, the only bilingual university in the world (English and American Sign Language), which is fully accessible to deaf and hard of hearing students.





# Activities and projects

## Annual bilingual laboratory: promoting integration amongst children

The RWF, in collaboration with the ISSS of Rome (the State Institute for Specialized Teaching for the Deaf), has just completed their annual bilingual laboratory (Italian and Italian Sign Language) as a part of the project "Bilingual Education: a model of integration for deaf and hearing children."

The project took place at the ISSS Magarotto 173° Circolo Didattico and provided a unique educational and cultural experience. The main goal of the project was to encourage the exchange of communication and integration of deaf and hearing students.

The annual bilingual laboratory was inclusive of all children and was ongoing until the end of the school year. It gave students in each class more than 30 hours of bilingualism in the classroom. This initiative began after an intensive phase during the first two weeks of school which involved children at primary and secondary school.

The LIS teacher of the program, Vincenzo Speranza, who is deaf and past winner of the "Roberto Wirth" Scholarship, carried out activities with the support of teachers and communication assistants who were aware and in tune with the educational curriculum set out for the children. Mr

Speranza applied the latest and innovative bilingual techniques he learnt in the U.S.A. during his studies at Gallaudet University.

The lessons were guided by the principle of full accessibility and were done interactively with the use of pictures and videos and the support of the smart board (an electronic device similar to a traditional blackboard, connected to a personal computer). This device was available in all classrooms at the ISSS Magarotto 173° Circolo Didattico.



An example of a bilingualism technique used in the United States was demonstrated by Mr Speranza at a nursery school. With the help of the smart board, Mr Speranza was able to tell fairytales using sequential images that represented different situations.

This gave the opportunity for deaf and hearing children to acquire new signs and new words in LIS (Italian Sign Language) and Italian. Mr

Speranza, in fact, for all new signs and words produced, thanks to the images from the smart board, was able to give the meaning of the signs and words linked to the context (for example: the difference between "inside" and "out" or between "yesterday" and "today"). During storytelling, the children were constantly stimulated by being asked questions specifically designed to test their understanding of LIS and Italian and the production of both languages.

Students of all ages received the bilingual workshops with great enthusiasm. They had a lot of fun, while increasing their linguistic skills, cultural awareness and experiences.





## Early intervention for deafblind children

To define what it means "to communicate" is not an easy task. One of the most common mistakes is to reduce communication to only a verbal exchange of information.

The educational experience gained from interacting with a deafblind child teaches us more.

The daily activities done in our multisensory laboratory show unequivocally that not only voice and signs are useful tools in establishing an effective link with deafblind children. Studies in the past (Albert Mehrabian, 1972), for example, have shown that the effectiveness of a verbal message is linked to the 7% in the verbal area (words), 38% in the vocal area (volume, tone and rhythm) and 55% are linked to body movements (mostly facial expressions). In the case of deafblind children bodily movement and expressions importance, in the expressive and receptive phases, is not only given to facial expressions (which often cannot be seen), but kinesthetic and haptic aspects. Recent studies carried out by the International Deafblind Communication Network, identified Emotional Body Traces as a valuable source to promote and encourage communication.

### What are body emotional images?

Deafblind children, often not having the opportunity to learn a natural language code in the community in which they live, express themselves through forms / behaviors that are difficult to read and interpret, even for those who are the closest to them. This, however, does not negate their desire to communicate but only makes it more "special". The behaviors that deafblind

children often have are derived from body-emotional images (BETs) impressed in their memory as a result of shared meaningful experiences. Educators must, therefore, appreciate and understand the most meaningful moments experienced by a child who is deafblind to be able to propose activities which will stimulate BETs in children and to co-create a shared code.

In light of these important theoretical insights, the staff at RWF, who is also able to count on a laboratory that was designed and built specifically for deafblind children, structure of each educational program takes into account: 1) the personality and interests of each child 2) the role of parents as the first agents of care. Each deafblind child, even at an early age, before "knocking" on our door, has a personalized story to tell. To neglect this is to underestimate and negate not only the role of parents and/or brothers and sisters, but their desire to understand the unique needs their child with deafblindness. Our psycho-

educational intervention always begins with a phase of listening. Subsequently, the child can count on the help of skilled professionals and their parents receiving the necessary psychological support essential in achieving lasting and effective results.





# Scientific articles

## The New York Deaf-Blind Collaboration and Rhinelander's Saturday Program

In February, Dr. Roberto Wirth and Dr. Stefania Fadda traveled to the United States to meet with various professionals in the fields of deafness and deafblindness in hopes of creating partnerships to benefit American and Italian deaf and deafblind children. In Washington DC, for example, they had the pleasure of meeting some prominent figures in the field of Deafblindness, such as Dr. Randy Pope and Dr. Jamie Pope and in the field of Deafness, Dr. Carol Erting and Dr. Marilyn Sass-Lehrer.

During their stay in New York, President R. Wirth and Director S. Fadda visited many schools and centers for the deaf and deafblind. These visits gave them opportunities to see the differences and similarities of services and programs provided at American schools and centers as compared to those at The Roberto Wirth Fund. They had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Sam Morgan, Dr. Susie Morrow, Dr. Clara Berg and Dr. Joe McNulty, the President of the Helen Keller Institute.

Dr. Wirth and Dr. Fadda learnt more about the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC), a project funded by the federal government at Queens College in New York.

The NYDBC aims to provide programs to improve services for deafblind children and adolescents by promoting a strong collaboration between professionals and families.

They also offer many services such as information and resource sharing, personal and online networking for parents and professional training. Individuals involved in the lives of deafblind children and/or adolescents are valued and encouraged to become actively involved in their lives and participate in programs provided at the NYDBC.

Another program worth mentioning is the Rhinelander's Saturday Program, headed by Dr. Laura Colin Klein and founded in 1989. This is the only recreational program that is cost free and takes place on weekends. It is dedicated to deaf children and adolescents in New York City. The Saturday Program's main objective is to provide a social environment where children can play and learn with other deaf peers, thus enhancing their self-confidence and social skills.

Overall, the visit to the United States was very interesting and filled with many rich experiences of growth and awareness in the fields of deafness and deafblindness.





# Fundraising



## There is always a good reason to donate to the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus 5x1000!

In 2011, there are continued opportunities to donate to the 5x1000!

This is the legislation that allows the taxpayer to allocate a share of their 5x1000 personal income tax to a non-profit organization such as the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus (RWF).

There are no costs to the taxpayer when you donate to the 5x1000. All you have to do is to write RWF's social security number - 97350450587 - in the space provided and sign. It is important to note that if a taxpayer decides not to donate, the 5x1000 is taken by the state. Also, remember that the 8x1000 is not the alternative choice to the 5x1000 and you have the choice of donating to both causes.

We appreciate everyone who donated their 5x1000 to the Roberto Wirth Fund and thanks to the funds raised to date it was possible to achieve some of our projects for deaf and deafblind children.

With each project, we work hard and with passion, never losing the sight of our main target: supporting children. With all the funds raised and with every donation received, we are filled with joy because it helps us to take one step closer to realizing our goals.

We take this opportunity to publicly thank all the people who chose to donate their 5x1000. It's always a great pleasure to feel the affection and support of our donors!

## "L'Aquila Insieme Sosteniamo" and "Bambino: identità, lingua ed educazione"

The Roberto Wirth Fund sponsored the "L'Aquila Insieme Sosteniamo" event which was held last year on March 12th and organized by ENS in the Province of Rieti.

The event was held at the Flavio Vespasiano theater and the duet Jalissee was sung. Many deaf artists had the opportunity to entertain the numerous supporters attending the charity event.

The purpose of the event was to raise funds to create a free summer camp for deaf and hearing children from the earthquake aftermath of L'Aquila. The camp will be held in Rieti during the month of June, 2011. The aim is to share experiences in hopes of increasing understanding and to create an integrated environment where every form of communication will be accepted and understood by both deaf and hearing children.

Another important event sponsored by the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus was the seminar on "Bambino: identità, lingua ed educazione", which was held on May 21st and organized by ENS in the Province of Biella.

The speakers at the seminar, Dr. Romilda Danesi and Dr. Vannina Vitale, were both former Roberto Wirth Scholarship winners. They submitted two reports on the education of the deaf child, games and the methodology of telling fairytales.

The seminar was opened by Dr. Stefania Fadda, the Director of the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus. She focused her presentation on self-perception and identity of deaf children and deaf adolescents.



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

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

The RWF party favors are designed for any occasion: wedding, birth, baptism, communion, confirmation, 18<sup>th</sup> 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 close them with a 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).

## How you can 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.

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 No. 8 Spring/Summer 2011

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Tel. 06 4182113 / Fax 06 4506671

**Registration - Tribunale di Roma:**

N° 499 del 07/11/2007