

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

2015 was a very positive year for Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus (CABSS). I would like to express my sincere thanks for all the support that was demonstrated on our behalf.

This support was especially felt, for example, at the fundraising theatrical event, "Il Marchese del Grillo", held at Teatro Sistina, and the "Pandora Donne x il Domani" contest that the Director of CABSS, Stefania Fadda participated in and won!

In addition, friends of CABSS organized various fundraising events in favor of deaf and deafblind children that you'll be able to read more about in this edition: My Cup of Tea, The Charity Gala Amitié sans Frontières and Torneo di Burraco organized by the Associazione Via Condotti.

2015 was also the year of the "Growing Step by Step," early multisensory intervention program for children who are deafblind.

The program was carried out until the end of September with the support of The Nando Peretti Foundation. The results achieved by the children

were presented at a symposium in Amsterdam.

On the national level there have been many requests in 2015 for CABSS to do presentations at various seminars or to provide consultation to families and professionals who work with deaf and deafblind children across Italy.

Before I conclude I would like to thank everyone who purchased my book, "Il silenzio è stato il mio primo compagno di giochi", written in collaboration with my friends Anna Folchi and Corrado Ruggeri and published by Newton Compton.

I continue to receive many messages from readers, who are deaf and hearing, some of whom are parents of children who are deaf. I am very moved to know that my story is for many a source of inspiration. A portion of the proceeds from the sales of my book will go to my organization.

Even though CABSS has achieved many goals in reaching out to children who are deaf and deafblind there is much more to do in Italy.

I would like to take this opportunity to communicate that we are looking for individuals to represent CABSS in other cities to reach out to families with children who are deaf and deafblind. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please contact CABSS.



Thank you and hope you enjoy this edition of "The First Step",

kindest Regards!

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Harmonious Interactions

National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness

Marleen Janssen, Marianne Riksen-Walraven, Jan van Dijk, & Bernadette van den Tillart

We all have the need to create close connections with other people. Relationships with people who truly understand us and people we can share experiences and emotions with.

When people interact harmoniously, their actions and attitudes towards one another are reassuring and comfortable. These interactions are essential for all human beings and especially important for individuals who are deafblind for they form the foundation of our well being and quality of life.

At CABSS, this is an important part of the work we do daily: observing, engaging in and promoting healthy positive parent-child/ intervenor (therapist)-child interactions.

During childhood, particularly during infancy, interactions with primary caregivers are the basis for healthy emotional, social and communication development. Children need these experiences to feel safe and gain confidence to explore the world and try new things.

Reading facial expressions, making eye contact, listening and responding are ways that sighted hearing children interact with caregivers. For children who are deafblind, these senses are greatly decreased or absent making naturally occurring opportunities to interact limited.

If children who are deafblind have difficulty in their interactions with others, this can cause emotional or behavioral problems and can affect communication development.

Children who are deafblind often use their own unique communication signals such as muscle tension, movements, postures and gestures which can be misunderstood or missed by caregivers.

It is also important to note that interacting effectively with children who deafblind require specific knowledge and skills that don't often come naturally to everyone. At CABSS we recognize the importance of having Intervenors (therapists) that are qualified in the

area of deafblindness when working with very young children who are deafblind and who are able to work with parents to foster harmonious healthy parent-child relationships.

Dr. Marleen Jansen and her colleagues, researchers in the Netherlands studied specific qualities of interactions of children who are deafblind and have developed techniques to teach families and educators how to improve interactions. The following are some characteristics of interactions between children who are deafblind and adults:

Initiatives: the adult or child begins interacting or introduces something new during an interaction

Confirmations: the adult clearly acknowledges the child's initiative in order to let the child know that he or she has been heard

Answers: the adult responds to the child, the child responds to the adult

Turns: the child and adult take turns

Attention: the adult focuses on the child's actions or both focus on what they are doing or object (joint attention)

Regulation of intensity: both adult and child maintain even paced interaction

Affective involvement: mutual sharing of emotions (often done through touch and movement with children who are deafblind)

Acting independently: the child is able to perform activities independently



Father and son



Mother and son

All children need harmonious interactions with caregivers to thrive. Researchers reported that if parents and teachers made positive changes to their attitude and behaviors, children who are deafblind responded by interacting more positively. At CABSS we have seen this happen and parents who consistently attended the program changed their perceptions of their child, developed their parenting skills and acquired confidence in advocating for their child. Parents also learned specialized communication methods and strategies to increase their feelings of competency in communicating, understanding and responding to their child's needs.



CABSS at the International Symposium on Mental Health and Deafness

CABSS participated in the second edition of the International Symposium on Mental Health and Deafness: "New developments on Mental Health and Deafness", organized by the European Society for Mental Health and Deafness (ESMHD).

The symposium was held on October 16th, 2015 in Amsterdam and organized to develop good practices and increase knowledge in the area of mental health with the goal of improving the quality of life and mental health of individuals who are Deaf. World renown experts and professionals participated at the conference

including Stefania Fadda, Director of CABSS. Dr. Fadda presented on "Multisensory Early Intervention with Deaf and Deafblind Children and their Families: Improvements and New Findings". The

presentation was focused on the results obtained by children who are deaf and deafblind in all areas of development and was received with great interest.

Dr. Fadda discussed the importance of early multisensory intervention in early years of a deaf and deafblind child's life. Children who do not have full access to sensory information and are not adequately supported earlier on in life risk becoming isolated, not developing communication skills or learning how to interact with others. Thanks to the early multisensory intervention programs at CABSS children have a positive learning environment that is stimulating and responsive. Children



Speakers at the Symposium in Amsterdam

can learn to use their senses and residual senses to gather information from the external environment, learn to integrate the senses in order to process and understand information, develop communication skills, feel encouraged to make choices and express their personality.

This is the very core of the programs carried out at CABSS aimed at deaf and deafblind children from 0 to 6 years.

The program also provides support to parents who are the principal agents of care. Children and parents work with the professionals CABSS throughout various phases of the program to meet the specific needs of each child, and later on during the transition and the integration process at school. Experts at the Symposium included Tejo van Gent, a known Dutch psychiatrist who for years has devoted his studies to mental health of Deaf children and adolescents and Mark Hiddema, regional director of Kentalis which offers services to individuals who are Deaf. Both presented the results of an interesting project for screening and psychological support for Deaf children at school. Lea Strandberg, a Swedish clinical psychologist and psychotherapist and Johannes Fellinger, a psychiatrist at the mental health center for individuals who are Deaf at St. John of God in Linz (Austria) proposed an overview of mental health services aimed at individuals who are Deaf in Scandinavian countries and Austria. From the United States, Robert Pollard, the professor of Psychiatry at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Director of the Deaf Wellness Center presented on domestic violence in the Deaf Community.

Stefania Fadda guest speaker at the "I Venerdì del Pendola"

On February 13th, 2015, The Mason Perkins Deafness Fund Onlus (MPDF), invited Stefania Fadda to speak at the, "I Venerdì del Pendola", at the Istituto Tommaso Pendola per i Sordi in Siena.

Dr. Fadda, started her discussion with how parents are impacted after receiving the diagnosis of the child's deafness or deafblindness. Ms. Fadda explained CABSS mission in providing early intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children and the many other activities the organization has carried out for over 11 years. Stefania Fadda, also drew attention to the "Fulbright-Roberto Wirth" Scholarship for Deaf

Italian graduates which offers students the opportunity to go to Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C. in the U.S to specialize in Infantile Deafness. She also spoke about the many students that CABSS has hosted and mentored such as American Fulbright scholars and Interns from George Brown College (Canada), Gallaudet University and Temple University (USA); In addition, she highlighted conferences and seminars CABSS organized with international speakers and the many presentations done at world conferences

dedicated to deafness and deafblindness.

"I Venerdì del Pendola", offers an opportunity to the deaf community to meet and learn in the areas of education, interpreting, language and deaf culture. For years the Mason Perkins Deafness Fund Onlus has invited many guests from all over Italy and abroad who have shared their artistic and/or professional experiences.



ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Presentation of “Il Silenzio è Stato il mio Primo Compagno di Giochi” by Roberto Wirth

Roberto Wirth author, with the collaboration of his friends Anna Folchi and Corrado Ruggeri, presented "Il Silenzio è Stato il mio Primo Compagno di Giochi" at the Istituto Statale dei Sordi in Rome.

The presentation was greatly supported by the Deaf community and received with great joy by families of deaf children. The crowd asked Roberto Wirth many questions, a man who

is considered one of the most famous Deaf men in the world, who had the courage to

put down on paper his personal feelings and all the challenges he faced throughout his life, some of which

he continues to face up until this day.

The book is an autobiography of a courageous child, Roberto Wirth, who was born profoundly deaf struggling to realize his dreams, overcoming obstacles, sometimes insurmountable, but allowing him to become the man he is today: a man very successful and admired, a positive example for many children born

deaf just like him and for families with children who are deaf.

After reading the book, many messages were sent to our President from friends and admirers but also, and most

importantly, by parents of children who are deaf who, thanks to the testimony of Roberto Wirth, can, perhaps, for the first time understand some of the issues their

children may face on a daily basis.

One of the messages sent to Roberto Wirth was from a mother, "Thank you Roberto Wirth for sharing your experiences with the use of very strong but sincere words. As a mother of a child who has been deaf from birth, I really appreciate it. Reading this book made me feel more secure about my daughter's future.

In 2016, more book presentations will be held across Italy, for updates please visit our website www.cabss.it or one of our social

networks  CABSS Onlus



CABSSOnlus.

A portion of the proceeds from the sales of his book to support the activities at Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus.



Roberto Wirth's book presentation at the ISSR

Stefania Fadda wins the “Pandora Donne x il Domani” contest!

On October 22, 2015, Pandora held a contest, “Pandora x il Domani” to promote female solidarity. Awards were given out in special recognition of women who everyday perform extraordinary acts for the common good. More than 700 applications were received from all over Italy where a jury selected 12 finalists, including our director Stefania Fadda. The award ceremony was held at the Fonderia Napoleonica Eugenia in Milan. Nicola Savino, host of the evening, announced the women who won the contest: Stefania Fadda Director of CABSS Onlus, Musella Caterina Chairman and President of AIMA Napoli Onlus and Maria Grazia Passeri President of Salvabebè Salvamamme. Besides receiving the title of "Donna x il Domani" winners won € 15,000 to purchase specialized goods and services. Stefania

Fadda will use the money to purchase specialized materials for the early intervention programs at CABSS. In fact, CABSS Onlus offers multisensory individualized early intervention programs to deaf and deafblind children from 0 to 6 years where they are exposed to a variety of stimuli. Thanks to these programs children have the opportunity to strengthen and make the most of all their senses, especially the use of touch and residual vision and hearing. Stefania Fadda, together with President Roberto Wirth and the staff at CABSS would like to thank Pandora, parents of children who attend the programs at CABSS, friends and everyone from all over the world for their support.

"To all those who voted for me, and especially to the children who attend our center every day, I want to dedicate this victory to them. The children at CABSS are my source of strength and give me the motivation to work even harder in their favor".



Winners of the Pandora contest with Nicola Savino



The Deafblind Child at School

An important component of the work that CABSS carries out in advocating for children who are deafblind in Italy is the right to early educational experiences and establishing collaborative partnerships with childhood educators who work with children who are deafblind aged 3 to 6 at school. CABSS is one of the first teams to work with children who are deafblind before they reach school age and assist children in transitioning into pre-school/elementary school.

Once the child is accepted at school CABSS works closely with school personnel (teachers, communication assistance, support workers) to successfully transition children into preschool/elementary depending at what age the child arrives at CABSS. CABSS provides consultation services and educates school personnel about the right method and approach to use with the child, assesses the school environment and subsequently works with the scholastic team to adapt the environment. CABSS also identifies specialized resources the child may need at school and participates in activity and program planning meetings.

One of the aspects that the staff at CABSS dedicates time to is the inclusion of the child who is deafblind into the classroom and specifically with his/her peers. It is very important that the child forms relationships with his/her classmates. To support the child in gaining an understanding of who he/she is interacting with, each child in the classroom has a tactile cue. Tactile cues are created one at a time and require the active participation of the child who is deafblind during each step of the process. This is important in helping the child make the connection between the tactile cue and his/her classmate.

After the child is successfully inserted into preschool or elementary school professionals who work with children who are deafblind at school frequently sought our consultation services. CABSS supports them in their role as educators by helping them to understand the complex

needs of the child, learn specialized methods, strategies and techniques to use with the child in the school setting to ensure accessibility to visual, auditory and tactual information, to promote social inclusion, well being and respect for the child who is deafblind.

We saw that educators after seeking our consultations services became effective in interpreting and responding to the child's needs, communicating and working with the child. They also gained an increased awareness of deafblindness being a unique disability and the importance of addressing the combined loss of hearing and vision.

Although we are very happy with the collaboration that has been formed and the professionals who work with the child who is deafblind at school we are also aware of the importance of having a specialized figure who works with the child who is deafblind in the school system, which at the moment, does not exist in Italy. Figures of this kind exist in Canada and are known as *Intervenors* and in the U.S. they have a similar figure who works with the child in the school system and are known as *Interveners*. This figure has specific training in deafblindness and is able to address the combined impact of hearing and vision loss. This figure is needed in the school system to be able to adequately modify and adapt the school setting and activities, to be able to integrate the child who is deafblind into the classroom, relay auditory, visual information that the child requires at school and help facilitate positive peer relations.

This figure would also have the role of acting as life skills coach, communication partner and play a critical role in teaching the child valuable skills and concepts.

Considering deafblindness has been only recognized as a unique disability in May 2010 by the Italian government it is our hope that the importance of having a specific figure of this kind in the school system will also be recognized and funding will be invested in training and subsequently hiring these specialized professionals to work with the child in the school system.



Tactile cue representing a classmate of a child who is deafblind at school



The staff at CABSS providing consultation to teachers at school

FUNDRAISING

Christmas filled with giving and theatre, CABSS Onlus and ANLAIDS Lazio, “Il Marchese del Grillo”

Christmas is one of the most magical times of the year but also a time of reflection, perhaps a time in which others tend to be a little more generous and filled with Christmas cheer awaiting the holidays to celebrate with family and friends.

CABSS Onlus and ANLAIDS Lazio Onlus wanted to celebrate the Christmas season by offering their supporters a night at the theater. Teatro Sistina was chosen for the occasion, one of the most recognized Italian theatres, that has become known over the years as the, “Theatre of the Romans”. On the historic stage, “Il Marchese del Grillo” starring Enrico Montesano and directed by Massimo Romeo Piparo was performed. The play was fully accessible with subtitles.

Our donors met for a toast at the Hotel Hassler before enjoying the play. “Il Marchese del Grillo” speaks of a time in Rome where the Pope and Church reigned power in the early 1800’s.

“Il Marchese del Grillo” – says the director – sheds light on Rome during a very noted time in contemporary history. The philosophy of the life Onofrio del Grillo pervades the entire play making satirical references to very real and terrible realities that Romans must cope with on a daily basis.



Outside Teatro Sistina

Amitié Sans Frontières Roma in support of CABSS Onlus

Last November Amitié Sans Frontières Amitié Roma organized an event dedicated to CABSS at the Hotel Hassler located at Trinità dei Monti. Each year the humanitarian association raises money with a local and international objective in mind. The international objective is established by the Assemblée Generale delle Nazioni Unite while the local objective is directly chosen by the organizing club.

With much delight, CABSS was chosen as the local objective and was the recipient of the funds raised. The charity gala was filled with many kind hearted and generous people.

President Roberto Wirth and Director Stefania Fadda of CABSS would like to thank Amitié Sans Frontières and, especially, Marco Morra who personally dedicated his time and energy to CABSS on this initiative. Dr. Morra, in fact, went to the operative site of CABSS and saw first hand the work CABSS carries out on a daily basis. CABSS will use the

funds raised from this event to continue providing early multisensory intervention programs to deaf and deafblind children.

Amitié Sans Frontières is a humanitarian association founded in 1991 in Monaco by Madame Régine Vardon West. In 1995 His Highness Albert II of Monaco became the Président d'Honneur and in 1996 it was



Roberto Wirth, Marco Morra e Giampaolo Imbasciati



Amitié Sans Frontières' logo

founded by Amitié Sans Frontières International whose mission is based on justice, tolerance and friendship. Over the years they founded many clubs around the world including Italy.



Charity Day My Cup of Tea Popup in favor of CABSS Onlus

Last year on October 18th, My Cup Tea held a charity day dedicated to CABSS Onlus. The event was held in a chic lounge on via Gregoriana, an area a must for shopping with some of the most famous Italian brands and emerging designers known for their excellence in fashion and design.

The funds raised from this event were donated to the early intervention programs and purchasing multisensory materials for the laboratory at CABSS.

It was very moving when Roberto Wirth, President and Founder of Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus, presented his book, "Il Silenzio è Stato il Mio Primo Compagno di Giochi".



Roberto Wirth autographing his book

He told his extraordinary story in person of being born profoundly deaf and the prejudice he faced from others and from his family.

The charity day was sponsored by the Consiglio Regionale del Lazio, Istituto degli Studi Superiori della Donna, by the Confartigianato di Roma and by Popup Rome.

Annual Charity Burraco Tournament

Green felt top playing tables, cards, judges, prizes and the magic of Christmas. The perfect picture of the annual charity burraco tournament in favor of Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus.

A wonderful evening of playing cards and solidarity in the magnificent halls of the Hotel Hassler, organized by Gianni Battistoni, the president of the Via Condotti Association and with the support of Mrs. Francesca Tagliacozzo.

We would like to thank Paul Picot who kindly donated prizes for the tournament and all the boutiques of the Tridente who donated prizes for the raffle.

The funds raised were used for expanding our early intervention

programs for deaf and deafblind children.

The early intervention programs at CABSS are aimed at children from 0 to 6 years and are based on an innovative method which is inspired by Canadian intervention model, the principles of multisensory therapy and active parental involvement.



Roberto Wirth, Cesara Buonamici and a guest at the burraco tournament

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 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: eng.cabss.it.

PLEASE NOTE

Your donation is tax deductible!

Donate 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.

**Children need
your support!**

TAX CODE
97350450587

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 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.

For more information please visit:

www.kbfus.org

eng.cabss.it



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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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