

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

each new edition of our newsletter, "The First Step" presents an opportunity for me to share the great work CABSS is carrying out and thank everyone who has shown their support. It's hard to believe that more than 10 years has gone by since I decided to make my dream a reality of carrying out a project dedicated to children born deaf like me and for children who are deafblind. We have come a long way, achieved many milestones and have received many accolades worldwide.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to John Cabot University in Rome for presenting me with an Honorary Degree in Humanities to recognize my achievements as an entrepreneur and my dedication to children who are deaf and deafblind. I have been always aware of the needs children who are deaf and deafblind and have worked hard to promote the development of early intervention programs and providing the

"Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" scholarship to students who desire to receive specialized training in infant deafness and deafblindness.

Our collaboration with The Fulbright Commission for Cultural Exchange between Italy and the United States regarding the scholarship has been proceeding with a lot of enthusiasm and is increasingly geared towards the active involvement of national and international academic institutions. Two important events took place during the first half of 2016: the ENS conference "University and Deaf students. Accessibility Training: comparing experiences in Italy and abroad" and Fulbright Day 2016 which was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

I would like to take this occasion to communicate to you that many new multisensory materials and technological devices were added to the laboratory at CABSS thanks to the

Director of CABSS, Stefania Fadda who won the "Pandora, "Donne X il Domani" contest. The children are very happy and are already using the new materials during their early intervention sessions.

A very special thank you to all of our friends and supporters who have sustained our early intervention programs by hosting fundraising events such as "Metal for Kids. United - All Star Charity Jam" organized by Mr. Fabrizio Troiano and the "700 - '800 engravings from Rome" event, created by Att. Renato Mammucari and Mrs. Goia Marina Pasquinelli Furlan.

Please enjoy reading this edition of "The First Step".

kindest Regards!



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An approach to meditation mindfulness for parents

“Mindfulness” is an approach based on meditation that acts to decrease stress, anxiety and depression linked to daily life. The classic definition for this practice was founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the pioneers of this approach. He defined mindfulness as the, “awareness that appears when intentionally attending to experiences in the present moment in a non-judgemental and accepting way.” The objective is to achieve complete understanding of oneself and learn to accept everything that one experiences on a daily basis thus reducing the state of suffering.

The diffusion of this practice, applied in the United States in the late 70's is spreading worldwide thanks to the results obtained by research. New findings were presented at the **2nd International Conference of Mindfulness**, held in Rome on May 11th-15th, 2016. The conference was organized by the Associazione Italiana per la Mindfulness. The Director of CABSS Stefania Fadda and CABSS contributed to the presentation: “Mindfulness Meditation and Evidence of Brain Changes Implications for Psychopathology”, which was an analysis of scientific research conducted with the objective of highlighting the brain circuitries and areas involved in mindfulness training, the mechanisms in which mindfulness exerts its effects at a cerebral level and the clinical disorders or difficulties that arise as a result.

Most of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are eight-week group-based therapies that teach mindfulness skills through a range of formal and informal mindfulness practices. Studies demonstrate the MBI's are effective in treating different disorders such as major depression,

anxiety and eating disorders. It has also been effective in relapse prevention in addictions. According to neuroscience, individuals who regularly participated in mindfulness practices for many years have increased the grey material in some cerebral areas of the brain and specifically in those areas that control arousal, mood modulation and various affective functions.

The practice of mindfulness is effective for parents of children who are deaf and deafblind. In 90% of the cases, parents who have children who are deaf or deafblind had no prior experience/knowledge in the area of deafness or deafblindness. The moment of receiving the diagnosis of deafness or deafblindness is a stressful event that may affect their beliefs and how they react to the event of having a child that is deaf

In our experience, the mechanism of emotion regulation is highly important because it involves coping strategies used by parents to manage intense emotions. In particular, we must differentiate between behavioral regulation related to the external control of emotional expression and cognitive regulation related to attentive control of emotional stimuli and cognitive modification strategies. Such strategies include: the ability to re-interpret the stimulus in respect to emotional response and extinguishing the emotional response in respect to the stimulus. In general, positive re-appraisal, non-responsiveness to stimuli and the consequent extinction induced by the practice of mindfulness plays a crucial role in decreasing stress levels on the part of parents of deaf and deaf-blind children.

Finally, the change in self perspective implies that all experiences "are observed as they appear, given time to pass by and leave the mind naturally." Also having a non-judgmental observation favors a detachment from identifying with mental contents (thoughts, emotions), known as decentralization. The capacity to decentralize appears to be a pre-requisite for psychic well-being of the parent.



or deaf-blind. The practice of mindfulness involves the following mechanisms in the brain: attention regulation, body awareness, emotional regulation and changes in self perception. In the practice of mindfulness a typical example of therapy done with parents is to ask parents to focus their attention on their breath and when an emotion, thought or impulse comes to mind about their child who is deaf of deafblind they are encouraged to focus back on their breath.

For more information:

Barcaccia, B., Barucca, M., Ariano, F., Brindisino, F., Camino, R., Carraro, P., Dettori, M., Garano, C., Iacucci, M., Massaroni, I., Valentini, M., Venga, S., Vitali, G., Mancini, F., Saliani, A. M., Fadda, S. (2016). Mindfulness Meditation and Evidence of Brain Changes Implications for Psychopathology. *2nd International Conference on Mindfulness*. 11-15 maggio, Roma.



Roberto Wirth, President of CABSS, receives an Honorary Degree from John Cabot University

CABSS is happy to announce that John Cabot University of Rome presented an **Honorary Degree** in Humanities to **President Roberto Wirth** to recognize his outstanding entrepreneurial achievements and his philanthropic work". John Cabot University is one of the largest and most prestigious American universities in Europe. 146 students from 26 countries attended the graduation ceremony held on May 16th at Villa Aurelia in the Gianicolo area.

"I am honored to receive recognition from one of the most esteemed academic institutions in the international community- stated Roberto Wirth- I would like to dedicate this degree to children who are deaf and deafblind whose well being has always been my lifetime goal."

The story of Roberto Wirth is one of an exceptional person who has shown that with determination and hard work all things can be achieved. An inspiring example above all for individuals who are deaf. His story is not one of entitlement of being born into an affluent family but one of a person who had to fight to demonstrate that he can achieve his goals despite of his deafness.

He has received numerous degrees and awards recognizing him for his work and studies including an Honors degree from Lynn University (2006), an Honors degree from Gallaudet University (2009) and the prestigious International DeafNation Inspiration Award (2012). Roberto Wirth can be described as both famous and obscure. Well known to many for the countless awards received on the international level rewarding him for his success as a business man and for his humanitarian commitment. Obscure in the sense that no one can truly understand deeply what he has faced in his life, and faces daily, what it's like to be "Roberto Wirth", someone

who lives between two worlds: the deaf and the hearing.

In 2015 he published his autobiography, "Il Silenzio è Stato il Mio Primo Compagno di Giochi", a passionate testimony of a man whose deafness forced him to confront the prejudices of others starting with those of his own family. "I always remember the day when I realize that life is not full of silence like I thought but a concert of words and sounds that I was excluded from leaving me lost. It is for this reason that I want all children born deaf like me to know that they can be the protagonists in shaping their destiny and have hope that they too can look towards the future with courage and optimism".

On the same day, an Honorary degree in Humanities was awarded to the **Minister of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism, Dario Franceschini**, for his contribution to the democratic life of Italy and his work in promoting Italian artistic heritage.

"We are proud to celebrate one of the largest graduation ceremonies ever held for John Cabot University graduates together with Minister Dario Franceschini and Manager Roberto Wirth, two human and professional exemplary figures. I believe that it is important to rediscover and give more emphasis to the value of the examples given by people who make a difference, who provide solid and positive points of reference for young people entering the world of work and preparing to embark upon one of the most important phases of their lives." – declared **Franco Pavoncello**, the **President of John Cabot University**, the first Italian to have this role at an American University.

John Cabot University is located in the heart of Rome, in the Trastevere area. There are approximately 1200 students from 68 countries who attend programs at the university where half of the students are made up of Americans and Italians make up the second largest group of students.



*Doctors Dario Franceschini,
Franco Pavoncello and Roberto Wirth*

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

The Multisensory Laboratory Grows at CABSS thanks to Pandora “Donne X il Domani”

New multisensory materials and technological learning tools enrich the multisensory laboratory at CABSS thanks to the Pandora “Donne X il Domani” contest. The initiative recognized special women who have been devoted to the common good of society. Three women won the contest including our Director, Stefania Fadda who by winning the contest received new materials (valued at € 15,000) for the multisensory laboratory.

Some of the new materials that arrived at the laboratory included:

Tactile discs that act to stimulate the feet and hands of children and motivate them to explore and learn. The discs vary in texture and color and also stimulate the use of memory.



Tactile discs

A gigantic octopus and a fruit/vegetable market that immediately attracted our children’s attention. The octopus is soft to hug and each of its eight tentacles has a different activity allowing children to engage in hours of sensory fun.



Sensory Octopus

A fruit and vegetable market: an explosion of colors that stimulate curiosity and offer many opportunities to engage in symbolic play and develop cognitive, social and communication skills.



Fruit and vegetable market

Tablets in different sizes to meet the visual needs and fine motor skills of children, offering the opportunity to use special early learning apps that support the development of cognitive skills, hand-eye coordination, vocalizations and response to sensory stimuli.



Tablet

Interactive bubble tubes: equipped with colorful lights and bubbles that stimulate the use of vision and encourages touch through vibration. It offers opportunities to develop the concept of “cause and effect” thanks to an interactive switch that allows children to change the colors of the lights and adjust the flow of bubbles.



Bubble tubes

A modular mobility chair to meet all the postural and comfort requirements for young children with special needs and support children in doing activities independently in total safety.



Modular mobility chair



ENS Conference: university and deaf students - the Fulbright Roberto Wirth scholarship

On May 27th, 2016 ENS held a conference on: "University and Deaf Students. Training on Accessibility: experiences in Italy and abroad" in the Magna Hall of Roma 3. The conference analyzed the university context and experience of Deaf students in Italy and abroad. The goal of the conference was to formulate proposals to improve accessibility in education for deaf students.

In addition, the conference sensitized public opinion, academic institutions and universities about principles and service accessibility outlined in the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to guarantee a more inclusive educational environment and quality of life for deaf university students.

Stefania Fadda, the Director of CABSS Onlus and Paola Sartorio, the Director of the Fulbright Commission spoke about the "Fulbright-Roberto Wirth" Scholarship. A scholarship that for 25 years has given young Deaf Italian students the opportunity to specialize in an area of psychology or education in the United States at Gallaudet University with the goal of enriching the lives of deaf and deafblind Italian children.



The audience at the conference

Gallaudet University is the only university in the world that is fully accessible thanks to its multicultural and bilingual learning environment (American Sign Language and English).

The Fulbright Commission for the Cultural Exchange between Italy and the United States offers opportunities to study, research and teach at American Campuses for Italian students and Italian Universities for American students. The Roberto Wirth Scholarship is one of the most recognized and distinguished program managed by the Commission.

Roberto Wirth and CABSS: Fulbright Day 2016

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) hosted the first Fulbright Day on May 31st with the objective of bringing together young foreign students and promoting the collaborative efforts among universities. Italian Students who will be studying in the U.S., American Students who have completed their educational experience in Italy attended the event. According to MAECI, initiatives like these promote Italian culture and specifically cultural exchange between Italy and the U.S with the provision of scholarship offered by the Fulbright Commission for Cultural Exchange.

The day opened with speeches by the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Vincenzo Amendola, U.S. Ambassador John Phillips and Roberto Wirth, President of CABSS who has been the Commission's partner for 25 years. Mr. Wirth

expressed his satisfaction with the close cooperation CABSS has with the Commission, aimed at the management and allocation of the "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" Scholarship.

The first part of the day was moderated by Gianni Riotta, journalist and writer, as well as Fulbright Alumnus and member of the Board of the Commission. The second part was inaugurated by the President of the Commission, Massimo Riccardo. Several roundtables were organized to promote Italian language and culture in the United States and to raise awareness of current international issues such as migration and global warming.

In addition, the General Director for the Promotion of the Italian Economic System, Vincenzo De Luca, the Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission, Paola Sartorio, academic institutes, private organizations who collaborate with the Commission and numerous representatives from the press participated throughout the day.



In the middle the Ambassador of USA John Phillips with Paola Sartorio and Roberto Wirth

FUNDRAISING

“Metal for Kids. United” in favor of CABSS

A unique initiative in Italy, “Metal for Kids. United” (MFK) took place on February 13th, 2016 at the Cross Roads Live Club of Rome, in favor of CABSS. Five hours of Rock, where 36 of the top international musicians, including musicians from the U.S.A. and Brasil, came together united in music to support the deaf and deafblind children at CABSS. Fabrizio Troiano (FaberTroy Entertainment) presented a check for € 2.100 to CABSS, received with gratitude by Giusy Carvello, CABSS’ representative for the evening. This moment was shared with enthusiasm and a large crowd who held their hands up high signing the rock symbol, the same symbol in American Sign Language for, “love”, something MFK showed that night for music and giving in favor of CABSS. We are happy to be a part of this initiative and chosen

by Mr. Troiano for the work we do everyday with our kids. To quote Mr. Troiano, “Metal for Kids is a dream come true for me, a dream that I have had since I was 11 years old when metal had such an impact on me. Supporting deaf and deafblind children at CABSS in this first MFK initiative has been a great source of inspiration”.

Initially the idea of putting together metal and deaf and deafblind children was a very new concept for us but after much reflection, we thought to ourselves, why not? Our children can do anything and metal offers an intense option where you can listen to music not only with your ears but feel the music through your body. MFK made a huge impact that evening due to its originality, the time that was dedicated to supporting deaf and deafblind children but mainly because it was organized by a musician who

was aised with a deep passion for music and who has made his dream come true, something that CABSS works hard to do on a daily basis in supporting children in achieving their dreams. The funds raised from this event, has allowed a deaf child, two years of age, and his family to participate in an early intervention program at CABSS.



Check presented to Giusy Caravello (CABSS Onlus) from Fabrizio Troiano (FaberTroy Entertainment)

The Los Angeles Marathon 2015: Mukhtar Murtaza runs for CABSS

Mukhtar Murtaza loves the children at CABSS and last January he contacted us to announce that he would like to support CABSS again during the Los Angeles Marathon 2015. Mukhtar Murtaza is a loyal friend CABSS, as well the professional runner who ran for us at the Rome Marathon raising funds for our early intervention programs in 2014.

He trained intensively for the Los Angeles Marathon which started from Dodger Stadium and finished at Santa Monica. Twenty-six miles, the pinnacle of success that all runners would like to achieve, something that Mukhtar did with passion to support CABSS.

The funds raised from the Marathon went to purchasing new multisensory equipment for deafblind children who attend our early intervention programs.

When we spoke to Mukhtar he told us that the marathon was very challenging. Los Angeles is the

largest city in California with uneven terrain such as hills which made running very challenging. He was able to overcome all obstacles in his path as he ran the marathon. He fought through the pain in his legs and when things got hard he kept going. His success is shared by his family and all the children, families and staff at CABSS.

Thanks Mukhtar!



Mukhtar Murtaza during the marathon



Mukhtar Murtaza with his family after receiving the medal



“ ‘700 - ‘800 engravings from Rome”, fundraising event in favor of children at CABSS

Thanks to the generous heart of Att. Renato Mammucari and a dear friend of CABSS, Mrs. Gioia Marina Pasquinelli Furlan, a wonderful evening of fundraising was organized in favor of CABSS.

Beautiful engravings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the private collection of Att. Mammucari, were described and commented on by the egrigious words of the famous historian and art critic Claudio Strinati. The event was held in the magnificent halls of the Hotel Hassler that were filled that evening of friends gathered in solidarity to support deaf and deafblind children.

By the expert hands of Chef Francesco Apreda, tasty meals were served on sparkling silver trays that seemed to circle the halls to the beat of the music arranged by Mirko Rovelli and Bonaldo Braconi.



From the left: Roberto Wirth, Gioia Furlan, Stefania Fadda and Renato Mammucari



Roberto Wirth and Gioia Furlan

Great atmosphere, people and solidarity did the rest to make it a truly enjoyable and unforgettable event.

To end off the evening, Att. Mammucari gave Doctor Wirth a beautiful piece of art chosen from the pieces that were selected for the exhibition. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Renato Mammucari and Gioia Furlan for their sensitivity towards our cause and for the time they so generously dedicated to CABSS. The funds raised during the evening went towards sustaining our early individualized intervention programs for children who are deaf and deafblind who attend our center. Each day we welcome children to CABSS and when we see their little faces smile our hearts are filled with warmth and joy. We would like to thank Renato, Gioia, Professor Strinati and everyone who has helped put a smile on their little faces.

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

The promotion of our President’s book, “Il Silenzio è Stato il mio Primo Compagno di Giochi” has been moving forward intensely.

Mr. Wirth presented his book in Milan on February 9th at the Open More Than Books and Florence on June 10th at Caffè Letterario Le Murate where he shared the intrinsic reasons that motivated him to write the book. He was accompanied by Corrado Ruggeri, editor, Anna Folchi, friend and colleague, and Stefania Fadda, the Director of CABSS Onlus.

His story is one of courage and of a child born profoundly deaf from birth who had to fight to make his dreams come true, overcoming many obstacles, at times insurmountable but important in shaping him into the man he is today: a man who is successful, admired and is a positive example for many children who are born deaf like him and their families.

Many deaf individuals who were at the book presentations could identify with what Roberto Wirth wrote in his autobiography. There was so much appreciation given, questions asked and anecdotes shared openly that many individuals have held in their hearts for years.

Always keeping the children at CABSS in mind, Roberto Wirth will donate a part of the proceeds from the sales of his book to CABSS.



Stefania Fadda, Roberto Wirth and Anna Folchi in Florence

FUNDRAISING

Support us!

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

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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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FOUNDATION
UNITED STATES



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

Bi - annual Newsletter of the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus

N° 18/ 2016

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Registration - Tribunale di Roma: N° 499 del 07/11/2007

Printed on 30/06/2016

