

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

This edition of our newsletter will include our past Christmas events. I have to say that during this special time of the year I especially feel all of your support and thanks to you we are continuing our mission of providing services to children who are deaf and deaf-blind.

On the 18th of December, 2016 we united with ANLAIDS Lazio to organize an event at Teatro Sistina where our many supporters were able to enjoy the wonderful musical EVITA. Overall, I'm happy to say that the evening was a great success! During this festive time of the year the staff at CABSS were very busy with many other events such as: The Annual Burraco Tournament in collaboration with the Via Condotti Association and Mycupoftea, an event organized by Flavia Muzi Falconi.

Every year on November 20th we celebrate Universal Children's Day and are thankful for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

being approved which guarantees the fundamental rights of all children in the world. For this special occasion, the Director of CABSS Stefania Fadda gave a presentation at the National conference organized by the Istituto Statale per Sordi of Rome (ISSR) on "Best Practices with Deaf, Blind and Deafblind children".

In addition, Doctor Fadda participated at the "HITalk" initiative and spoke about her career and experiences as a professional that has guided her to dedicate herself to children who are deaf and deaf-blind. She also shared the history of CABSS and how the children learn to discover the world around them and to communicate.

We also accepted MAC's (Movimento Apostolico Ciechi) invitation to participate at their seminar along with other Italian organizations who work in the area of sensory disability. It was with great pleasure that Doctor Marta Cidro-

nelli, a staff member who has worked with us at CABSS for many years, presented on "The inclusion process of children who are congenitally deafblind at school".

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Foundation "Pio Istituto dei Sordi" of Milan for its generous donation making it possible to accept two more deafblind children in our early multisensory programs.

Please also take some time to read our article on "Pro-Tactile", a new movement, method and philosophy in the world of deafblindness, created in the United States!

kindest Regards!



In this number:

- Universal Children's Day: Best Practices at CABSS Onlus.....p. 2
- Pro-Tactile: Philosophy, Movement, Responsibility.....p. 3
- The Fondazione "Pio Istituto dei Sordi" makes it possible for more children to attend early intervention programs at CABSS.....p. 4
- Stefania Fadda, Director of CABSS speaks at the HITalk initiative: "Inspires, Motivates, and Reflects".....p. 5
- CABSS presents on Deafblind Children at School at the MAC seminarp. 5
- EVITA: Fundraising event in favor of CABSS and ANLAIDS Lazio.....p. 6
- A Shimmering Christmas Event in favor of CABSS.....p. 7
- The Annual Burraco Tournamentp. 7
- Support us.....p. 8
- Support CABSS directly from U.S.A.!.....p. 8
- Donate your 5X1000.....p. 8
- "Il Silenzio è Stato il Mio Primo Compagno di Giochi"p. 8

Universal Children's Day: Best Practices at CABSS Onlus

Every year, on November 20th, we celebrate Universal Children's Day to remember a very important moment in history. On November 20th 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the Convention on the Rights of the Child, stating for the first time that the fundamental rights of children must be recognized and guaranteed to all children in the world.

There are many events organized every year on this special day and in 2016 CABSS spoke at a National Conference, organized by the Istituto Statale per Sordi in Rome (ISSR) on "Best Practices with Deaf, Blind, and Deafblind Children". Stefania Fadda was among the many speakers including professionals and experts who presented on children with sensory disabilities and children's rights. Dr. Fadda did a presentation on "The Benefits of Early Multisensory Intervention" (S. Fadda, G. Caravello, M. Cidronelli, L. Harripersad, 2016).

CABSS was founded 12 years ago by Roberto Wirth who believes that all deaf and deafblind children have the right to an education and access to resources to obtain a better quality of life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promotes self-reliance, and facilitates the child's active participation in community as outlined by art. 23, paragraph 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

CABSS supports deaf and deafblind children by providing early multisensory intervention programs that are goal oriented and planned according to the unique characteristics and potential of each child. These programs are the only ones of its kind in Italy. All programs are carried out with the use of specialized tools and materials that enable visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and proprioceptive stimulation. We have seen that by engaging in these programs children are able to focus, improve their attention span, strengthen their memory skills, develop the ability to problem-solving, encourage the acquisition of orientation and mobility skills, develop an awareness of self, others and the environment, encourages interaction with others, such as the creation and maintenance of positive

relationships and promotes language development. Great emphasis is placed on skill and concept development.

Despite the good practices implemented by CABSS, and other organizations that participated at the conference dell'ISSR, there is still much more to be done to be successful in removing all obstacles for the full implementation of the rights of children with sensory deficits.

This reality is confirmed by the results found in the "Study on the population of people with sensory and multiple disabilities", carried out by ISTAT and published in February 2016.

years are deafblind. This differs from previous estimates dating back to the seventies where it was noted that 3 to 11,000 people were identified as deafblind.

The study that ISTAT carried out on the population of individuals with sensory disabilities was conducted taking into account not only the medical approach but the international ICF classification which views disability as the result of the interaction between the state of health of an individual and the environment in which the person lives. Thanks to this study it was possible to highlight the challenges of all age groups of the population in question, such as their living environment and the absence of interventions, services and aids that allow better living conditions.



From the right: Prof. Ivano Spano, Senator Rosetta Enza Blundo, Doctor Stefania Fadda and LIS interpreter Massimiliano Mondello

According to estimations made by ISTAT, sensory disability (blindness/vision loss, deafness/hearing loss and deafblindness) affects over 1.7 million people, including adults and children, of which nearly 1.2 million have a hearing impairment, and about 330,000 have a visual impairment, while the rest, about 11% of the total, have congenital or acquired deafblindness. This latter finding is very important since, for the first time, we have information regarding how many people are affected by deafblindness in Italy. The research done by ISTAT highlighted that the condition of deafblindness is a real widespread social problem, in fact, well around 189,000 people (0.3% of the Italian population), of which 12.1% is thus in the age group 0-64

CABSS is committed to reaching the largest possible number of deaf and deafblind children in Italy and offering them the opportunity to benefit from early multisensory intervention.



Pro-Tactile: Philosophy, Movement, Responsibility

What is Pro tactile?

Pro-tactile is a philosophy, method, an attitude, and political movement. It was developed in 2002 by two Deafblind women from Seattle, Washington, aj granda (prefers to use lower case letters for her name) a longtime Seattle Deafblind community advocate and Deafblind Community Class instructor and Jelica Nuccio former Director of Seattle's Deafblind Service Center and co-creator of the National Support Service Providers Pilot Project (NSSPPP). Pro-tactile means "touch communication" and differs from tactile sign language. granda and Nuccio stress that it should not be reduced to haptics alone. Pro-Tactile uses touch to provide important visual information to make communication completely accessible to individuals who are deafblind.

Why did the Movement begin?

Deafblind people found that when they were communicating and interacting with others they didn't really feel "connected". In general they often missed critical visual information. They also found that they needed a way to communicate in informal groups of 3 or more deafblind individuals without relying on interpreters. For years, it has also been noted that standard forms of sign language and tactile sign language, do not always fully meet the needs of people who are Deafblind. With little or no usable vision Deafblind individuals miss important parts of communication. Examples include environmental information, non-verbal or non-manual cues, sounds, facial expressions and emotions.

Pro-Tactile: The Philosophy

Pro-Tactile promotes the rights of Deafblind individuals to define themselves and their culture and not be dominated by the thinking or the values of the non-deafblind dominant culture. It means to value touch and the "Deafblind Way" just like individuals who are Deaf value ASL, vision and the Deaf commu-

nity.

It challenges sighted-hearing privilege and rejects the pressure from the dominant society to conform to sighted-hearing norms.

Pro-Tactile supports every person who is deafblind and rejects emphasis placed on differences such as the type and degree of vision/hearing loss, communication preferences and intellectual abilities. It is against putting emphasis on an individualistic conception of what it means to be "Deafblind". It supports the entire spectrum of Deafblind individuals in the Deafblind Community and affirms the value of a common tactile language. Although Pro-Tactile is primarily focused on touch it doesn't discourage the use of other modalities that provide access to information. All people can use Pro-Tactile: Culturally D/Deafblind, Hard of Hearing Deafblind or any Individual who is Deafblind. It also values the contributions from non-deafblind individuals and welcomes their participation as equals in the deafblind community.

The Pro-Tactile philosophy says, "Deafblind can Do!". It is Pro-Touch, Pro-Tactile, Pro-Experience and Pro-Responsibility.

Pro-Tactile: Responsibility

Pro-Tactile primarily focuses on the deafblind experience but also stresses the importance of deafblind individuals in making decisions, taking initiative, seeking out information and getting direct information on their own rather than through passive second-hand means.

A deafblind person who utilizes the Pro-Tactile Way does things independently (with or without support) which helps him/her lead self-determined and fuller lives.

For more information and videos please visit: www.protactile.org

Sources: wctest.seattledbnc.org; https://issuu.com/dbtip/docs/pro-tactile_understanding_the_touch; <http://dotbug3.blogspot.it>



Image source: Pro-Tactile ASL: a new language for the DeafBlind

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

The Fondazione “Pio Istituto dei Sordi” makes it possible for more children to attend early intervention programs at CABSS

Thanks to the contribution from the Fondazione “Pio Istituto dei Sordi” of Milan, two more congenitally deafblind children, that we will call Matteo and Dario to maintain confidentiality, were given the opportunity to attend early multisensory intervention programs at CABSS.

From September 15th 2016 to January 15th 2017, a functional assessment was done for both children. Thanks to this assessment the staff at CABSS were able to: identify the senses the children used to alert and take in stimuli; identify their learning channels; identify their likes and dislikes (which provided useful information to the staff in being able to choose appropriate materials and objects to use in the early intervention programs); obtain crucial information in the cognitive area such as memory and problem solving skills; gather information in social situations and about the parent-child relationship.

The staff at CABSS were also able to identify the skills and the communicative potential of both children, which showed favorable to the use of a total communication approach. After the completion of the assessment, an individualized plan was created for both children.

The early intervention programs at CABSS actively involves parents in the sessions. We have seen that, after the assessment and during the early intervention program, parents become more confident in themselves in the task of raising their children, have developed a strengthened ability to identify and understand the needs of their children and changed how they once perceived their child. During the assessment, they also had the opportunity to understand how their children access information and communicate their needs; they learned strategies to deal with the various emotional and physical states of their child; learned techniques and ways of interacting with their children.

The Foundation "Pio Istituto dei Sordi" pursues charitable purposes for the promotion and realization of services and interventions in favor of deaf individuals and social inclusion through global forms of support. To achieve their mission, the Foundation operates mainly in the field of human services, education, health care, social services, and social charity. CABSS and Matteo and Dario's parents thank the Foundation for this wonderful opportunity.



One of the children who attends the programs at CABSS thanks to the contribution from the Pio Istituto dei Sordi



One of the children who attends the programs at CABSS thanks to the contribution from the Pio Istituto dei Sordi



Stefania Fadda, Director of CABSS speaks at the HITalk initiative: “Inspires, Motivates, and Reflects”

Promoting innovation to address social issues and improve our daily life is the mission of HITalk (High Idea Talk), an initiative that the Director Stefania Fadda had the honor of being involved in for her innovative ideas, developed by the team at CABSS.

HITalk carries out its mission by organizing regular meetings where six different Italian speakers are invited each time to exchange their thoughts and experiences as professionals and to share their stories with an audience composed mainly of young people looking for inspiration. The meetings take place in Rome, at the LUISS Enlabs, the sponsor of the initiative and one of the largest start-up acceleration programs in Europe.

Doctor Stefania Fadda participated at the meeting on the 22nd of November, 2016 along with five other

guest speakers: Antonio Gregolin - Artist and Journalist, Loredana Taddei - Head of CGIL National Gender Policy, Mujah Maraini - Melehi - Director, Producer, Screenwriter, Actress, Barbara Riccardi - Teacher and Ambassador for the Global Teacher Prize, and Christian Capobianco - Vice President of Tanslator4Children.



Doctor Fadda during her speech

Doctor Fadda spoke about the professional path that led her to devote herself with commitment and passion to deaf and deafblind children and to contribute to their future. She then moved the audience with the story of CABSS and of the deaf and deafblind children who, every day, accompanied by the staff and parents, learn to discover the world around them and to communicate. Dr. Fadda was so inspiring that she was invited to attend a special meeting held at the Hall of Protomoteca – Capitol on March 5th, 2017, along with other outstanding female professionals in areas such as entrepreneurship, research, politics and social commitment: "HITalk WoW! Woman is noW Love. Power. Genius."

CABSS presents on Deafblind Children at School at the MAC seminar

Marta Cidronelli represented CABSS at the V seminar on Educational Rehabilitation Strategies and Inclusion of Individuals with Multisensory Disabilities by presenting on the inclusion process of congenitally deafblind children at school (S. Fadda, G. Caravello, M. Cidronelli, L. Harripersad, 2016). Presentations were focused on case studies of individuals with complex disabilities. The seminar was organized by the Movimento Apostolico Ciechi and by Fondazione MAC Insieme (Corbiolo di Bosco Chiesanuova – VR, 23/25 giugno 2016). Professionals, national experts in the field, renowned organizations and institutions including the Università di Padova, Lega del Filo d'Oro, Associazione Lettura Agevolata Onlus and Centro Non Vedenti di Brescia attended the seminar.

Doctor Cidronelli shared a very important component of the work that CABSS carries out in the area of the rights of children who are deafblind and education. In addition to developing early intervention programs in a multisensory environment, CABSS collaborates with schools and educators that work with children who are deafblind 3-6 years of age and provides consultation during the transition phases into preschool and primary school. It is crucial that a cohesive and coordinated team is formed at school. CABSS offers support to school personnel by giving guidance and information about communication methods; carrying out assessments of the school environment, making adaptations based on the needs of children and identifying resources and materials the children may need in the classroom (i.e.: light boxes, smart board, tactile materials, embossed/textured surfaces).

Furthermore, given the absence of a figure that is specialized in deafblindness in Italy, CABSS offers consultation to the multidisciplinary team that works with the child who is deafblind such as communication assistants or tiflodidatti (assistants of the blind) to give them suggestions of the right approach and strategies to utilize with the child.

This year's presentation was published in "Racconti. Percorsi di reciprocità e persone con disabilità", magazine of the Fondazione MAC Insieme (Anno II – N. 0).



Doctor Cidronelli during her speech

FUNDRAISING

EVITA: Fundraising event in favor of CABSS and ANLAIDS Lazio

CABSS and ANLAIDS Lazio decided to come together once again to organize the most important event of the year: The Christmas Event. On December 18, 2016 both organizations chose the musical EVITA to be the focus of their fundraising initiative.

A special thank you to Mr. Massimo Romeo Piparo, the Artistic Director of Teatro Sistina of Rome for opening the doors of the theatre and dedicating the evening to the two associations. Many supporters of the organizations were able to make a contribution to two great causes and at the same time enjoy a beautiful show. The musical was about the life of the great, passionate and complex heroine Evita Perón. All songs of the musical were performed by a live orchestra directed by Maestro Emanuele Friello.

The spectators of this musical experienced the illusion of going back to the 1900's, reliving the life of Evita, a heroine, emblem of tenacity, charisma and determination.

Malika Ayane received a standing ovation for her depiction of EVITA. Ayane is much loved for her class, talent and beautiful voice. She was a great success in conveying intensity and excitement on stage as well as bringing sophistication and sensitivity to the storyline.

Before the show, Dr. Roberto Wirth and Dr. Massimo Ghenzer, Presidents of CABSS and ANLAIDS Lazio, met and greeted some of their supporters at the Hotel Hassler, the ideal setting where everyone was able to exchange Christmas wishes around the majestic Christmas tree at the hotel, savor succulent dishes and raise their glasses in a toast to a wonderful Christmas season.

Special thanks to all the sponsors of the evening that made this event possible: Gold Sponsor - Autoimport e Private Banker Leopoldo Barocci; Silver Sponsor - Studio Piccinelli, del Pico, Pardi & Partners e Solartec; Bronze Sponsor - Studio Legale Consolo. Many thanks to Revlon and the generosity of Daniela Vergara who with her professionalism did the welcoming speech applauding Roberto Wirth and Massimo Ghenzer for this initiative and creating two wonderful organizations that make a difference in the lives of so many children and teenagers.

Many raving reviews for the musical EVITA also came from the press:



The audience at Sistina Theatre

"Great accolades to the Artistic Director of the Sistina Piparo that brought to the stage a great "rock opera" who personally oversaw every detail not only in the direction of the cast but also the adaptation in Italian, translating the beautiful text and all 27 songs written by Tim Rice "(ADN Kronos).

"Massimo Romeo Piparo organized a superb show, with Evita played by Malika Ayane, who is not only vocally flawless but in her depiction of the first lady" (La Stampa).

"The public enthusiastically received the very humble and professional commitment of Malika Ayane, an undisputed star of this highly emotional musical where the singer has shown exceptional class with her extraordinary voice" (ADN Kronos).



From left: Massimo Ghenzer and Patrizia Ferri of ANLAIDS Lazio Onlus; Stefania Fadda and Roberto Wirth of CABSS Onlus



Shimmering Christmas in favor of CABSS Onlus

At the most wonderful time of the year, at Palazzetto on the steps of Piazza di Spagna some of the most talented artisans of Italy were revealed at the Mycupoftea "Shimmering Christmas" event. CABSS was able to raise funds to support its programs, thanks to Flavia Muzi Falconi, the organizer of this chic and creative event at one of the most famous lounges of the Capital.

A must event for shopping, where some of the most well known brands, and emerging Italian artisans displayed their creative excellence in design, craftsmanship and fashion. The fresh and crisp atmosphere of Mycupoftea offered the opportunity to see designers at work, engage in a bit of wine tasting or preview some of the most original art collections. It was the perfect occasion for authors and journalists to meet and attend one of the many presentations held at the event.

This rendezvous was an experience where the atmosphere was sophisticated but also informal. Fashion, design, art were thoughtfully placed at the Palazzetto where the creations of each artisan blended in perfect harmony within the living spaces.

At the end of the event, on December 22nd, the organizers of Mycupoftea took the time to create a "Tree of Gifts" where all gifts were generously donated by the artisans at the event to help raise funds for CABSS.

The Mycupoftea Popup was sponsored by the Consiglio Regionale del Lazio, dalla Confartigianato di Roma and the Istituto di Studi Superiori sulla Donna.



A small glimpse of the CABSS table at Mycupoftea

The Annual Burraco Tournament

The Christmas season is filled with lots of celebration and Christmas cheer. Each year CABSS and its donors get together at this special time of the year to have some fun at the annual CABSS Charity Burraco Tournament.

Lovers of one of the most famous card games in the world competed at the playing tables in an exciting competition. The Burraco Tournament was held in favor of CABSS thanks to Gianni Battistoni, the President of the Via Condotti Association.

The first award was a plane ticket to the United Arab Emirates generously donated by Ethiad.

A charity raffle was also held that evening where prizes were donated by some of the most prestigious boutiques of Rome. We would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to: Battistoni, Bolaffi, Buccellati, Bur-

berry, Eleuteri, Ferrari Store, Frette, Gioiellerie Fiore, Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Hermes, Loro Piana, Marcello, Missoni, Peppino Capuano, Prada, Profumerie Castelli, Radionovelli, René Caovilla, Rossano Ferretti, Salvatore Ferragamo, Stuart Weitzman, Tod's and Tory Burch.

We would also like to thank Francesca Tagliacozzo for the years of collaboration she has given to this event which has allowed us to enrich our early intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children.

All programs are carried out at our multisensory laboratory and based on an innovative method, inspired by the Canadian model Intervention, the principles of multisensory therapy and focuses on active parental involvement



Playing tables

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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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 Rockfeller 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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