

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

I would like to open this issue of our newsletter with a very special thank you to the Fulbright Commission for cultural exchanges between Italy and the United States and the United States Ambassador in Italy, Lewis M. Eisenberg for the unexpected but very appreciated award given to me at the 70th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Italy, recognizing the commitment I have made in supporting deaf students, for over 25 years, through the Fulbright Roberto Wirth Scholarship.

I would also like to say that the team at CABSS is very dedicated to strengthening their knowledge to providing quality services and programs to deaf and deafblind children 0-6 and their families. Before we closed for the summer, they did a refresher course in deafblindness taught by Canadian Deafblind Specialists. They learned new specialized strategies, methodology and techniques that promote the development of skills and concepts in children who

are deafblind.

In this issue of the newsletter, you will find an article where the 2017/2018 "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" scholar, Lisanna Grosso, expresses the importance of communicating from an early age and the advantages of early exposure to language. Following this article you will find Part 2 of the article dedicated to children with CHARGE syndrome focusing on their educational needs. In addition, I would like to present, Lorene Dameff, the 2017/2018 Fulbright scholar, who was hosted by CABSS and carried out an accessible learning project to teach English and American Sign Language to young deaf students.

The newsletter will close by highlighting the fundraising initiatives, in favor of our children, made possible by our loyal supporters, who I would sincerely like to thank: Italia Squisita and all the chefs involved in second edition of the most scrumptious charity

event of the Capital, "Spezial Party"; the Ambassador of Switzerland in Italy, Giancarlo Kessler, who dedicated an exclusive gala dinner to CABSS; and Pomellato, a fine luxury Italian jewelry company, who has joined with the Hotel Hassler in supporting the early intervention programs at CABSS.

I would like to wish much success to the new association dedicated to CHARGE syndrome, "Mondo Charge", founded by individuals with CHARGE syndrome and their families.

kindest Regards!



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The Importance of Communicating from an Early Age and the Advantages of Early Language Exposure.

By Lisanna Grosso*



From left to right: Paola Sartorio, Executive Director of the Italian Fulbright Commission; Lisanna Grosso, former Fulbright—Roberto Wirth Scholar; Stefania Fadda, Director of CABSS.

patterns in sign language that can be similarly found in sound. This means that the brain does not discriminate languages based on the modality.

I am convinced that if a child lives in a serene environment, he/she will be happy, and if a child is happy, he/she will be able to learn different languages. I would therefore like to conclude with an exhortation: let's expose our young deaf children to the language that is the most accessible to them. At the table or when we read to them or during moments of shared play, let's remember to give eye contact and in every situation always take the time to communicate.

If you only read my article, the work is only half done. The rest is up to you! Make my words come alive and change history in 2018!

Most individuals associate the concept of language deprivation with the examples of Victor and Genie, the story of two children deprived of language for 12-13 years who were not able to acquire a language and age appropriate cognition. These children were at the center of public, scientific and linguistic debates for many years.

A century has passed since we last heard about the story of Victor and Genie, but in the deaf world, language deprivation is still a reality today. In 2014, the president of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) stated that out of 70 million deaf individuals in the world, only 20% receive adequate education. This is shocking because it means that 80% of the deaf do not have a solid linguistic foundation and cannot communicate with fluidity and ease. It also means that their opportunities for acquiring a job are significantly reduced and there is an increase in socio-psychological problems due to isolation and frustration.

The most serious issue is that individuals who are deaf cannot express themselves or understand others (Humpries et al., 2012). It is a vicious circle. How can we stop it? We can start by ensuring that children are exposed to language and communication from an

early age. Sign language is an accessible language that children who are deaf can be exposed to early in life.

Renowned Doctor Laura Ann Petitto, a researcher at the Brain and Language Laboratory (BL2), at Gallaudet University, Washington DC (U.S.A.), has shown that deaf children acquire sign language just as hearing children acquire spoken language. "Early exposure is essential for the acquisition of ANY language. Children need to be exposed immediately to an accessible mother tongue (L1), regardless of the modality" (Petitto, 2014). This proves that sign language does not interfere, slow down cognitive learning and development. However if a child spends more than a year without receiving linguistic input his/her cognitive development could be greatly affected.

It has also been shown that the auditory cortex remains active until the age of 12, so the brain does not risk atrophy even if the auditory cortex is not stimulated. Children who are deaf and who are exposed to sign language do not fall into this category, it has been found that sign language actually stimulates the auditory cortex. Another important finding is that brain tissue, which was previously thought to be devoted only to sound, also recognizes

* Lisanna Grosso won the "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" scholarship, which allowed her to study at Gallaudet University during the 2017/2018 scholastic year. The article by Lisanna is based on the report that she presented when she returned from the United States, as part of a seminar held in Rome on June 21st, 2018. The seminar was organized by CABSS, with the collaboration of the Fulbright Commission for Cultural Exchanges between Italy and the United States and the support of the Istituto Statale per Sordi di Roma (ISSR).



CHARGE Syndrome - Part 2

Educational Needs of Children with CHARGE Syndrome

Educating a child with CHARGE syndrome is very challenging and complex. It is crucial to design a program that addresses the following areas :

Communication

Children with CHARGE syndrome can highly benefit from the use of a total communication approach which utilizes many linguistic and augmentative forms of communication to compensate for the child's combined loss of vision and hearing. It can include: gestures, simple signs, print/Braille, facial expression, symbols and pictures in addition to sign language and speech. The choice of communication modality is highly individualized to each child and it is important that the entire educational team and family work together in developing and carrying out a communication plan.

The impact of hearing and vision loss and additional sensory losses

It is crucial that the team take into account the functional vision and hearing of the child and how it will affect their ability to function on a day to day basis and gather information. It is

very important to consider how far out and how well a child can see and hear and other factors such as lighting and environment noise. Consultation with vision, hearing and deafblind specialists is necessary in making a comprehensive list of accommodations to ensure that the child's education program addresses his/her vision, hearing loss and/or sensory loss.

Curriculum

The content of child's curriculum should be age appropriate and challenging because children with CHARGE are very capable. Often their cognitive abilities are underestimated due to their communication challenges and delays of using expressive language. Many children with CHARGE, in fact, are very intelligent and have an amazing ability to learn and retain information and do very well in academic subjects. Although they have specialized learning needs they can highly benefit from specific teaching strategies and have the right to a curriculum that is motivating, flexible and incorporates a variety of skills. stress quite quickly and may need specialized equipment and/or an area to rest or recharge.

For example, having a small quiet space with a bean bag chair or a soft cushioned area with magazines or a swing is very helpful. Giving the child the opportunity to take a quick "break" is critical in staying calm and avoiding behavioral outbursts. A flexible schedule that allows for "breaks" is important. All professionals working with the child should be aware of "signals of behavior" and understand how to respond to the child at these times. Being able to anticipate the need for a break is a key to lowering stress levels and creating a successful educational environment.

The physical environment should be set up to motivate and engage the child with CHARGE. Having a flexible environment that can change and grow with the child can make learning fun and relaxing. Including such things as their favorite people or characters into the space, rotating materials to keep their interest or utilizing creative ideas can really make a difference.

Source:

Majors & Stelzer. (2016, March 11). Educational Needs of Children with CHARGE Syndrome. Retrieved from www.chargesyndrome.org

Welcome Mondo Charge!

We are delighted to inform you that the first Italian association dedicated to CHARGE Syndrome, Mondo Charge became official on February 4th, 2018.

Mondo Charge was founded by individuals with Charge Syndrome and their families. It has the primary objective of creating a communication network to allow individuals with CHARGE syndrome, their families and professionals to exchange information.

CHARGE is a rare syndrome that is considered one of the most complex pathologies from both a medical and developmental perspective. It is recognized as one of the major causes of deafness and blindness.

Mondo Charge was also created to provide a place that parents can find comfort to face difficult moments and find solutions to challenging issues.

Parents of Mondo Charge believe that by making their experience available means facilitating access to treatment, rehabilitation, specialized aids, information and resources.

For more information please visit their website at www.mondocharge.it.

On the right: A child with CHARGE Syndrome.

Picture from: www.mondocharge.it



ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Lorene Dameff, American Fulbright Scholar hosted by CABSS

Lorene Dameff, profoundly deaf from birth and winner of the 2017/2018 scholarship, was hosted by CABSS during the first semester of the academic year, in collaboration with the Fulbright Commission for Cultural Exchange between Italy and the United States.

The Fulbright Scholarship is offered to American students who would like

to come to Italy to carry out research or projects in the area of Deafness.

On the right: Lorene Dameff, 2017/2018 Fulbright Scholar.



Project on accessible English Language Learning for Italian Deaf Students

Thanks to CABSS, the children and youth at elementary, middle and highschool at the ISSS Magarotto School in Rome benefited from Lorene's project. The objective of the project was to make English accessible utilizing specific techniques for teaching a foreign language and American Sign Language (ASL).

Making foreign language learning accessible to the deaf has always been a mission for Lorene. When she was a highschool student she wanted to learn French and Spanish like other hearing highschool students but there were not any resources to support her in learning a foreign language. This personal experience motivated her to pursue foreign language teaching focusing on accessibility for the Deaf.

Lorene graduated from the University of Arizona (U.S.A.) in "Interdisciplinary Studies", and later, at the University's Center for English as a Second Language, where she specialized in teaching English as a Foreign Language. She currently teaches at a highschool where there are many students who are deaf and are new to the country. Before she came to Italy as a Fulbright Scholar, she also taught at the Center for English as a Second Language supporting a group of refugees in learning English.

Lorene worked on deepening the children and youth's grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills at the ISSS Magarotto School. In addition, they learned and used ASL and studied the history of the American Deaf

Culture. Students learned about many deaf people, in the past and present, who were able to overcome their difficulties and achieve great success in different fields. The biggest lesson that Lorene wanted to teach the students was to believe in themselves and not to give up, to continue to learn new things, including foreign languages, because by doing so they can make a difference, in their family and in the community, as students, as professionals and citizens.

The Value of American Sign Language and Deaf Culture in the United States: Seminar and Course

The Fulbright Scholar, Lorene Dameff presented a seminar and taught a course on ASL organized by CABSS in collaboration with the Fulbright Italian Commission and the Istituto Statale per Sordi di Roma (ISSR).

The seminar was held on April 17th, 2018. Lorene passionately presented on the American Deaf culture and did a comparison of American (ASL) and Italian Sign Language (LIS) and culture.

In fact, the number of schools providing integrated bilingual schools for children who are deaf and hearing, in USA, have increased and many more young deaf individuals are making the decision to go to college.

She went into an in depth discussion of the many years of battles and hardships that the American Deaf community faced to obtain rights, equal opportunities and the full accessibility to public places and services. Today, in the United States, deaf people have much more resources because of this and now have hope for the future. Access to education has played and continues to play a key role in obtaining equity. In fact, there has been an increase in schools for the deaf and/or integrated schools for deaf and hearing children. More and more young deaf youth are deciding to continue their studies and go to college.

To achieve success three elements are needed: time, knowledge and determination. The key to everything, said Lorene, is to be positive and patient and, above all, determined, never giving up!

Lorene dedicated the same enthusiasm shown during the seminar during the ASL course. The free 12-hour course provided a basic understanding of American Sign Language. The initiative was a great success with numerous requests to register, but only the first 35 people were given the opportunity to participate. More than half of the students were deaf who were very eager to learn ASL!



Prestigious award presented to Roberto Wirth for the 70th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Italy

The staff at CABSS is happy to congratulate President Roberto Wirth for the award he received for the 70th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Italy, on June 14th, at the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI). The award was presented to Dr. Wirth by the Ambassador of the United States of America to Italy, Lewis M. Eisenberg, for his dedication in promoting the rights of deaf children 0-6 years old and deaf students for over 25 years.

Roberto Wirth has been profoundly deaf since birth and fully understands the needs of children who are born deaf like himself and for this reason, in 1992, he decided to offer a scholarship and started to collaborate with the Fulbright Commission in Italy. The scholarship today is now known as the "Fulbright-Roberto-Wirth" Scholarship.

The objective of the scholarship is to offer young Italian students the opportunity to specialize at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. (U.S.A.), the most renowned university in the bilingual world (American Sign Language and English) that is accessible to deaf students and who trains students to become professionals in the area of Deafness.

"I would like to thank the Fulbright Commission for the cultural exchange between Italy and the United States. This award for me is a symbol of friendship that I hope will continue to grow in the future. Each year, in Italy, one child out of 1000 is born deaf and from the very first months of life need the right support, professionals and services to ensure healthy growth and development, something that the scholarship actively addresses".

The ceremony celebrating Fulbright's

70th anniversary in Italy was opened by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Enzo Moavero Milanesi, the American Ambassador and the Executive Director of the Commission, Paola Sartorio.

The Fulbright Program was established by the Commission in 1948, following an agreement between the Italian and the American Government, and is co-financed by the MAECI and the U.S State Department. Since its establishment in 1948 to date, over 10,000 scholarships have been assigned to students in Italy and the United States for study, research and teaching.

In addition, Zegna and the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) also received awards for their respective scholarships funded by the Italian Fulbright Program.



On the left: Roberto Wirth, President of CABSS, and Lewis M. Eisenberg, the United States Ambassador to Italy.

Below: All the attendees at the 70th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Italy at the MAECI.

Pictures taken by the Italian Fulbright Commission.



Italia Squisita's Spezial Party in favor of CABSS Onlus

The second edition of Italia Squisita's Spezial Party took place on April 9th, 2018. The party was a tribute to spices. Many renowned Italian chefs, pastry chefs, pizza chefs came together to raise money to support the early intervention programs for deaf and deaf-blind children at CABSS.

Even though it was a rainy and humid day, that did not ruin the evening at the beautiful Palazzetto located next to the Spanish Steps, where numerous guests could taste colorful and delicious gourmet dishes. The Spezial Party was an occasion to get to know some of the most famous chefs in culinary excellence, taste homemade beer, Italian wine and discover many products made in Italy.

"Childhood is the most crucial phase to intervene in the lives of children who are deaf and deafblind and their families. A time where children learn to interact with others and the environment", explains Roberto Wirth, who has been profoundly deaf since birth. "CABSS stimulates cognitive and communication development from the very first months of life".

Francesco Apreda, stellar chef of the Imago panoramic restaurant has always been at Roberto Wirth's side from the very beginning, supporting this cause. He is a master of spices who has collaborated with Roberto Wirth for years and was responsible for organizing this event where he invited his colleagues to prepare dishes with a particular flavor: one of spice and giving.

We would like to thank Italia Squisita, all of the renowned chefs of Italian culinary excellence, and the young up and coming chefs who shared their innovative dishes to support the children at CABSS:

Chefs: Francesco Apreda ("Imàgo" - Rome); Hanoze Shroff ("Vetro all'Oberoi" - Mumbai); Andrea Aprea ("VUN" - Milan); Giulio Terrinoni ("Per Me" - Rome); Gianfranco Pascucci ("Al Porticciolo" - Rome); Cristina Bowerman ("Glass Hostaria" - Rome); Luciano Monosilio ("Pipero Roma" - Rome); Gabriele Bonci ("Pizzarium" - Rome); Fabio

Ciervo ("Terrazza dell'Eden" - Rome); Marco Claroni ("Osteria dell'Orologio" - Rome); Giuseppe di Iorio ("Aroma" - Rome); Alfio Ghezzi ("Locanda Margon" - Trento); Davide del Duca ("Osteria Fernanda" - Rome); Laura Marciani ("Ristorante degli Angeli" - Rieti); Stefano Marzetti ("Ristorante Mirabelle" - Rome); Fabio Pecelli ("Caffè Propaganda" - Rome); Andrea Provenzani ("Liberty" - Milan); Albe Esteve Ruiz ("Marzapane" - Rome); Ciro Salvo ("50 Kalò" - Naples); Lino Scarallo ("Palazzo Petrucci" - Naples); Domenico Stile ("Enoteca La Torre" - Rome); Daniele Usai ("Il Tino" - Rome); Massimo Viglietti ("Enoteca Achilli al Parlamento" - Rome).

Pastry Chefs: Sebastian Delandre (Ristorante "Mirabelle" - Rome); Simona Piga ("Imàgo" - Rome); Sabatino Sirica ("Pasticceria Sirica" - Naples).

Bartenders: Emanuele Broccatelli ("Caffè Propaganda" - Rome); Fabrizio Avello ("Imàgo" - Rome)

Music: Alex Paletta e Dj Solko from U-fm Radio.



The entire team at the 2nd edition of "Spezial Party" in favor of CABSS.

Picture by Italia Squisita.

From right to left: Roberto Wirth, President of CABSS; Gisella Bertini, Fiorella Baserga and Carlo Spinelli of Italia Squisita; Francesco Apreda, Chef from the Hassler Roma.

Picture by Italia Squisita.



Swiss Italian Cuisine in favor of CABSS

In June 2018, the Swiss Embassy and in particular the Swiss Ambassador to Italy, Giancarlo Kessler, expressed the desire of organizing a gala dinner infusing Swiss and Italian cuisine. Our President, Roberto Wirth, of Swiss origin, who adores Switzerland, famous for its rich culture and breathtaking landscape, home to some of the most beautiful lakes, forests and mountains in the world, was delighted with the idea of celebrating Swiss Italian cuisine.

The gala dinner took place on June 12th, 2018 at the Hotel Hassler. President Wirth and Ambassador Kessler wanted that all the proceeds from the dinner go to CABSS Onlus.

The taste papillae of the guests were stimulated by the different ingredients fused together. All dishes were prepared by stellar chef Francesco Apreda



and were so eloquently described by Marta Lenzi Ripetto, one of the most exclaimed food and wine experts, who succeeded in taking the guests on a culinary journey.

The event celebrated the traditional Italian and Swiss cuisine with dishes that were inspired by what Marta Lenzi Ripetto's narrated in the book,

From left to right: The Director of CABSS , Stefania Fadda, The President of CABSS, Roberto Wirth, The Swiss Ambassador to Italy, Giancarlo Kessler and Food and Wine Expert, Marta Lenzi Ripetto.

“Menu per Orchestra”, where Ms. Ripetto describes the recipes of Chef Martino and tells his story of how he left Switzerland and came to Rome becoming the personal chef of two Popes.

She also describes how spices, aromatic herbs and sweet and sour flavors became more popular from the 17th century something that was the focus at the gala dinner as guest experienced an explosion of flavors as they enjoyed each dish.

Roberto Wirth and Pomellato come together in supporting CABSS

On June 26th, 2018 Pomellato and Hotel Hassler collaborated in organizing a fundraising event in favor of the children who are deaf and deafblind at CABSS.

Many guests admired the exquisite



jewelry from exclusive collections outdoors in the Palm Court of the beautiful Hotel Hassler. A part of the proceeds from the sales were donated by the Pomellato Jewelry Maison.

Last November, Pomellato and Hotel Hassler organized a fundraising event in favor of CABSS. Thanks to the proceeds from that event we were able to offer early intervention services to a little deafblind girl, Stella (fictional name), who begun her program last fall with us at CABSS in the multisensory laboratory. We are confident that by having all the necessary support and services she will be able to face and overcome all difficulties along her path and celebrate her successes.

During the event the President of CABSS and General Manager of the Hotel Hassler, Roberto Wirth and the General Manager of Pomellato, Carlo Anceschi, expressed their happiness of the partnership they established with each other and hope it will last for many more years to give children

like Stella the opportunity to have early intervention services and to expand the services offered by CABSS to children who are deaf and deafblind and their families.



*From left to right: The President of CABSS, Roberto Wirth, The Director of CABSS, Stefania Fadda, and the General Manager of Pomellato, Carlo Anceschi.
Picture taken by Pomellato.*

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 on our website: eng.cabss.it.

PLEASE NOTE

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.

**Our 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" and selecting "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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Via Nomentana 56 – 00161 Roma Tel. 06 89561038 / Fax 06 89561040 / Mob. 331 8520534

www.cabss.org

E-mail: info@cabss.it

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