

# THE FIRST STEP...



## Dear Readers,

My name is Veruschka Wirth, the new President of Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus.

I took over the reins of the association after my father's sudden death with the awareness that CABSS, and all deaf and deafblind children, were a very important part of his life. I want to honor his memory by carrying on his mission.

My father founded CABSS in 2004 to give deaf and deafblind children the best possible start to life and the opportunity make their dreams come true.

My brother Roberto Jr., who has assumed the role of Vice President of CABSS, and Stefania Fadda, the Director of CABSS, will stand by my side as I step into my father's shoes with great admiration and pride to steer his organization.

It is with great pleasure for the first time I present to you the Cabss Newsletter. The staff at CABSS have been very busy in carrying out scientific presentations, fundraising events and working with children and families.

A would also like to take this opportunity to thank to our donors who make it possible for Cabss to welcome and support more and more deaf and deafblind children.

Hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

kindest Regards!



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## Mondo CHARGE conference: "A New Beginning"

The first conference of Mondo CHARGE, the Italian association founded by individuals with CHARGE Syndrome and their families, was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2022 in Rome at the Auditorium San Paolo at Ospedale Bambino Gesù. During the conference, the urgency of undertaking, in Italy, a path of awareness towards the needs of children and young people with CHARGE Syndrome was stressed. In fact, the conference was successful in raising awareness in families, individuals with CHARGE Syndrome and among experts in the field.

Among the invited speakers, Dr. Stefania Fadda represented CABSS illustrating the benefits of early multi-sensory intervention for children with CHARGE syndrome. Furthermore, she conducted a workshop entitled "A journey through emotions", aimed at mothers of children and teenagers with CHARGE syndrome.

CHARGE syndrome is a rare genetic disorder with an incidence of approximately 1/10,000 births and involves multiple anomalies and issues with growth and/or development. Furthermore, it is among the main causes of childhood deafblindness.

CABSS welcomes children with CHARGE Syndrome, from the moment of diagnosis until they enter primary school, offering specialized support thanks to the use of early intervention techniques and methods specific to their needs.

In addition to Dr. Fadda, the following experts in the field presented at the conference: Jerry G. Petroff, professor at the College of New Jersey (U.S.A.); Timothy Hartshorne, professor at Central Michigan University (U.S.A.); Nancy Salem Hartshorne, professor at Delta College (U.S.A.); Darija Udovicic, Director of the European and Eurasian region within the framework of Perkins International/Perkins School for the Blind.



Stefania Fadda lead the workshop "A Journey Among Emotions"

Various institutions and organizations gave their patronage, including the Ministero della Salute, the Comune di Roma and CBM Italia Onlus.

## The "Best Poster at the SITCC Congress" awarded to CABSS

CABSS won the best poster, entitled: "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy accessible to deafblind children" (Stefania Fadda, Giusy Caravello, Marta Cidronelli, Laura HARRIPERSAD, 2022), an important recognition at the Intermediate Congress "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Childhood and Adolescence: New Perspectives and Intervention". The congress was organized by the Italian Society of Cognitive - Behavioral Therapy (SITCC) and was held in Ancona in November 2022. The work carried out by CABSS stood out among the rest for its innovation.

The poster explained how the use of cognitive behavioral therapy (Cognitive-Behavior Therapy, CBT) in favor of deafblind children is still in an emerging phase, although CBT stands out as one of the most widespread and effective models for un-

derstanding and treating psychopathological disorders such as anxiety disorders.

Faced with the lack of scientific literature on CBT and deafblind children, the poster created by CABSS was a valuable contribution to the field and illustrated how children who are deafblind can deal with any state of anxiety and sadness with the help of cognitive-behavioral strategies that are adapted to their individualized needs.

SITCC is a non-profit scientific-professional society, whose purpose is to deepen the theoretical, methodological and clinical aspects of the cognitive behavioral approach to psychological, psychiatric and social problems.



The award "best poster" given to CABSS



## The "Don Giulio Tarra" award in memory of Roberto Wirth

On Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2022, the fifth edition of the "Don Giulio Tarra: Research and Deaf Studies" Award took place at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan.

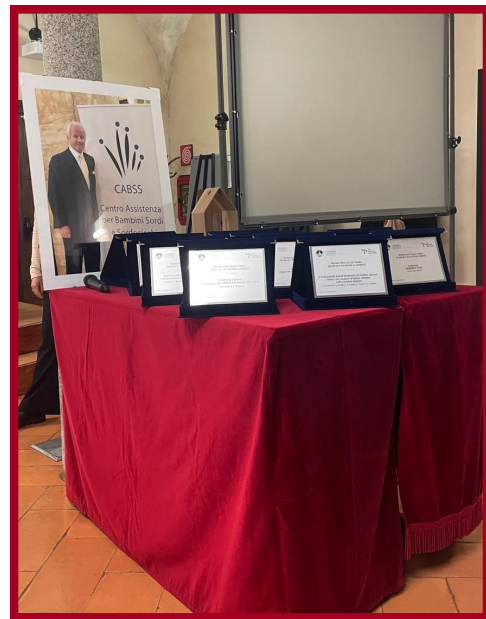
The "Pio Istituto dei Sordi" Foundation of Milan, in collaboration with the Research Center on Intercultural Relations of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, created an award named after Don Giulio Tarra, a leading figure of the 19th century who cared for poor rural children and the deaf. The awards are given to scholars of scientific and academic disciplines who have carried out studies and research in the area of deafness.

The "Don Giulio Tarra" Award was given in memory of Roberto Wirth for his extraordinary talent in the luxury hospitality sector and for his social commitment. *"Roberto Wirth was an Italian entrepreneur and philanthropist who stood out among the rest. He was the owner of the Hassler Hotel in Rome and a brilliant hotelier who carried on his family's legacy. Born deaf, he was able to be a positive role model and example for many young people with hearing disabilities."*

*Since 1992, in collaboration with the Fulbright Commission for Cultural Exchanges between Italy and the United States, the "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" scholarship has been awarded to educators of deaf and deafblind children (...) each year. In 2004, he founded and presided over the Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children - CABSS to ensure that deaf and deafblind children and their families were receiving necessary support and services. Roberto Wirth has received numerous awards and recognition in Italy and abroad for his entrepreneurial and philanthropic activities such as the honor of Cavaliere Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana in 2007 (...) and a special award for his personal commitment and dedication to the promotion of the rights of deaf children aged 0 to 6 in 2018 (...). The Pio Istituto dei Sordi dedicates the Don Giulio Tarra Award in his memory for the significant com-*

*mitment he made to children and adults with hearing disabilities and their families".*

The award was received by his children Veruschka and Roberto Junior, the President and Vice President of CABSS who was accompanied by Stefania Fadda, Director of the non-profit organization.



A photo of Roberto Wirth at the award table



From left to right: Stefania Fadda, Roberto Wirth Junior, Veruschka Wirth and two organizers of the "Giulio Tarra" award



# ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

## Seminar CABSS: “ I Capafiori” and “Forme che si Formano” APP’s

Professionalism, collaboration and creativity were the ingredients that inspired the creation of the “Fantastica Fabbrica delle Storie. Leggiamo e Segniamo con le nuove Storybook App in LIS e Italiano Scritto”. The CABSS project was carried out by a team of deaf and hearing professionals, under the supervision of Dr. Stefania Fadda.

The project began in 2020, shortly before the national lockdown due to COVID-19, and closed on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, 2022 with a seminar dedicated to the two storybook apps “I Capafiori” (2021) and “Forme che si Formano” (2022) that were produced as part of the project. The Apps are educational tools, in which, through the use of an interactive and bilingual visual storytelling method (LIS -Italian Sign Language and Written Italian), offer deaf children fun, original and accessible stories to watch and read alone or with parents, teachers, educators and friends.

The seminar was moderated by Stefania Fadda, took place at the Mediateca Visuale at the Istituto Statale per Sordi di Roma (ISSR), and opened with greetings from Veruschka Wirth, President of CABSS, Isabella Pinto, Commissaria Straordinaria of the ISSR and Dirigente Scolastica of the ISISS “A. Magarotto”, and Paola Sartorio, Executive Director of The U.S. - Italy Fulbright Commission.

After the opening remarks, the presenters: Silvia Palmieri, author and illustrator of the stories of the Apps; Susanna Ricci Bitti, LIS-Italian Sign Language Consultant on the project; Nicola Della Maggiora and Eloisa

Matina, Italian Sign Language (LIS) narrators of “I Capafiori” and of “Forme che si Formano” accompanied the audience on an interesting and exciting journey in the discovery of the Fantastic Factory of Stories.

Silvia Palmieri explained how the two stories were created, how they were conceived in LIS - Italian Sign Language - and subsequently adapted into written Italian. Furthermore, she demonstrated how to utilize the Apps: The WATCH section of the App allows you to watch the stories narrated in LIS - Italian Sign Language - in the READ section, you can watch and read the stories in Italian. In the LEARN section you can access a glossary of clickable words where you can view videos that provide the LIS - Italian Sign - and the corresponding fingerspelling for the selected words.

Susanna Ricci Bitti discussed visual narration (Italian Sign Language and Written Italian) and how it favors the development of literacy in deaf children. Parents and educators can utilize the Apps to stimulate early literacy skills in children. The Apps allows for individual use or joint usage where parent/child, educator/child or child/friend can watch and read a story together, establish a dialogue, play rhyming games, explore the contents of the stories and make connections with lived experiences. Storybook Apps are great learning tools and foster shared attention, the ability to anticipate what will happen in the story, the ability to reason and express oneself, in LIS - Italian Sign Language or in spoken language.

Nicola Della Maggiora and Eloisa

Matina spoke about their experience as narrators on the Apps and described how important it was for them to convey the characteristics, emotions and actions of the characters in the clearest way possible to make the stories understandable and accessible to children.

The seminar ended with a video message from Melissa Malzkuhn, the Director of Motion Light Lab, at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. (U.S.A.). Together with her colleague Tayla Newman, spoke about the technical development of the Apps using the VL2 (Visual Language and Visual Learning) Storybook Creator, a storytelling tool designed to facilitate visual language learning.

Giusy Caravello contributed to the planning and supported the various phases of the project; Marta Cidronelli contributed to the adaptation of the stories in written Italian and curated the promotion of the Apps; and Laura Harripersad made suggestions of how some the illustrations could be clearer for children with visual impairments.

The Storybook Apps are available free of charge, for iPad, on the Apple AppStore and were also made possible thanks to the contribution from the Bank of Italy.



From left to right: Eloisa Matina, Stefania Fadda, Silvia Palmieri, Susanna Ricci Bitti, Paola Sartorio, Veruschka Wirth, Isabella Pinto and Nicola della Maggiora

## Educational program plans for children who live outside Rome

The Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children- CABSS opens the doors of its multisensory laboratory to all deaf and deafblind children, even those who live outside of Rome. In fact, we host families from all over Italy, and even from abroad, thanks to the creation of intensive programs that allow them to come to our Rome headquarters and spend a week with us.



*A deafblind child playing "doctor"*

Children and families can stay at hotels provided by Soggiorno Sereno Sandro Gabbani Onlus with whom we have been collaborating for some time now. Soggiorno Sereno is a wonderful initiative that was created by Federalberghi Roma that hosts people in need of care and their relatives free of charge.

During the intensive week at CABSS we identify the specific needs of the children, set goals to be achieved and develop individualized programs. We focus on stimulating visual, auditory, touch, olfactory, proprioception and vestibular senses, work on fine and gross motor skills, and encourage the development of cognitive, emotional, social- relational and communication abilities.

Once parents are back home they can share their experience and the suggestions we have given them to therapists and educational personnel



*A deafblind child playing "little indians" with her mother*

who work with their children, and together as a team we are able to contribute to the child's various educational plans and work on reaching common goals.

## CABSS at the 2022 Accessibility Days

Accessibility Days are one of the most awaited events that focus on accessibility, inclusion and digital technology. On the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2022 CABSS had the honor of giving their patronage for the sixth edition of this initiative, which took place at the historic Istituto dei Ciechi in Milan where companies, professionals and organizations shared the latest information and innovations for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, they showed how technology can help in the design and development of more accessible solutions for daily living.

CABSS also took part in the event as an exhibitor and provided two workshops about its interactive, accessible and bilingual Storybook Apps, "La Fantastica Fabbrica delle Storie" for children who are deaf.

In particular, in the context of the workshop entitled "Storie che lasciano il Segno", CABSS was represented by Dr. Silvia Palmieri who, in streaming, explained how our Storybook Apps are created and how they work. In the second workshop, entitled "La Comunità Sorda segnante e le persone con pluridisabilità e sordocecità al tempo del coronavirus", Dr. Giusy Caravello illustrated how, during the 2020 lockdown, technology allowed CABSS to carry on its early intervention programs and projects supporting children and families online.

The Accessibility Days in Milan were organized by Unione Italiana Ciechi e Ipovedenti Ancona, Universal Access, DevMarche, UgidotNet, Italian Agile Movement. Other organizations in addition to CABSS that gave their patronage included ENS Section Prov. Milan, CNR ISTC LaCAM of Rome, La Casa delle Luci Foundation,

Lega del Filo d'Oro and Rai per il Sociale.



*Laura Harripersad and Giusy Caravello at the Accessibility Days in Milan*



## An unforgettable Christmas at Teatro Sistina

On Tuesday December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, after we were forced to stop our annual Christmas event due to the pandemic, the shows at Teatro Sistina made their awaited debut!

Our supporters were able to enjoy, for the first time in the world the show "Cats" set in a hypothetical and futuristic works of art and archaeological treasures of Rome with the Colosseum as its backdrop. The great international production of "Cats" of PeepArrow Entertainment was directed, produced and adapted by Massimo Romeo Piparo, with music by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, and lyrics by Nobel Prize winner T.S. Eliot.

40 years after being on Broadway, where it held the world record for the most consecutive performances until 2006, "Cats" is still today among the top four most performed musicals in history. The protagonist Grizabella, masterfully interpreted by Malika Ayané, was accompanied by a large cast of artists and by a live orchestra conducted by Maestro Emanuele Friello.

A mix of fantasy, drama and romance was conveyed to spectators on one of the most important stages of the capital: on one special night of the year all the cats meet at the Jellicle Ball where, their wise and benevolent leader, Old Deuteronomy, announces which of them will be able to be reborn as a Jelli-

cle cat. The show was pure magic, with an incredible soundtrack, which includes the unforgettable song "Memory", spectacular sets, incredible make-up and costumes, breathtaking choreography.

Before the show some of the supporters of CABSS Onlus and ANLAIDS Lazio Onlus went to the Hassler Roma for a Christmas cocktail. Under the incredible Christmas tree at the Hassler our guests exchanged greetings and were able to

toast to the New Year. After the cocktail they strolled along Via Sistina to the theater which was adorned with Christmas lights. When everyone took their seats, they were welcomed by our President, Veruschka Wirth, and by the President of ANLAIDS Lazio, Massimo Ghenzer.

We thank our supporters for always participating at our events, and being part of our big and beautiful family!

A heartfelt thanks also goes to the sponsors, without whom the evening would not have been possible:

**Gold Sponsor:** Lexacta Global Legal Advice - Studio Legale Consolo

**Silver Sponsor:** Working Innovation Network

**Bronze Sponsor:** Credit Suisse - Lamuc 89, information technology at your service



*From left to right: ANLAIDS Lazio Administrative Director Patrizia Ferri, ANLAIDS Lazio President Massimo Ghenzer, CABSS President Veruschka Wirth and CABSS Director Stefania Fadda (Noemi Marcone's photo)*

## Hassler Rome golf tournament

On a splendid day last June, the Parco di Roma Golf Club hosted the Hassler Rome Golf Tournament.

The initiative was dedicated to Roberto Wirth, the founder of CABSS and its President until he suddenly passed away. He loved going to the Golf Club and few weeks after his death, we decided to remember him with a tournament in his honor.

Numerous players registered for the tournament and funds were raised in favor of the deaf and deafblind children at CABSS. At the end of tournament Roberto Wirth Jr. and Stefania Fadda awarded prizes to the winners of the competition and thanked them for their warm support.



*From left to right: Roberto Wirth Junior, Stefania Fadda, Laura Harripersad and Giusy Caravello*



## Beethoven, the Deaf Genius with Music in his Heart

Last November we were guests at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and had the chance to attend the Beethoven Violin concert VS Bruckner symphony n. 9. The conductor was Sir Antonio Pappano and on the violin, Lisa Batiashvili, one of the greatest violinists of our times.

The concert for violin and orchestra in D major was composed by Ludwig van Beethoven in 1806, and is divided into three movements: Allegro ma non troppo; Larghetto; Rondò: Allegro. The concert, dedicated to his childhood friend (Stephan von Breuning), is one of the greater compositions by the musical genius.

The Symphony No. 9 in D minor is the last piece of Austrian composer Anton Bruckner, which he dedicated "to the beloved God". The symphony is incomplete due to his death in 1896, and is divided into four movements. Feierlich, misterioso; Scherzo, Bewegt, Lebhaft; Trio, Schnell;

Langsam, Feierlich; Finale (incomplete).

The choice of this concert was not accidental, in fact, the great German composer Beethoven became deaf around the age of 40 and started to have hearing problems before the age of thirty. However, being deaf did not stop his infinite genius, in fact some of his greatest compositions, including the Ninth Symphony, were composed right in his adulthood. His soul was devoted completely to music, and his great willpower accomplished the magic that distinguishes his music.

Before attending the concert, our President Veruschka Wirth and Vice President Roberto Junior had the pleasure of offering a cocktail to the many supporters who flocked to the event. We thank the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia for their support. Special thanks also go to Dr. Michele dall'Ongaro and Dr. Mauro Bucarelli.



CABSS President Veruschka Wirth and the President - Superintendent of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia Michele dall'Ongaro

## Burraco and solidarity in favor of CABSS

A charity burraco tournament took place in favor of CABSS Onlus on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October at the splendid Hotel Hassler.

As in previous editions, we at CABSS joined forces with Gianni Battistoni and Francesca Tagliacozzo to bring together burraco lovers to play for a good cause. Participants engaged in healthy competition and won beautiful prizes that were up for grabs that evening.

At the end of the tournament, a charity raffle was held with its proceeds going to CABSS making it possible to expand its early intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children. These programs are individualized and specific to each child, are carried out within the multisensory laboratory "Il Primo Passo..." and are based on an innovative method which was inspired by the Canadian Intervention model, the principles of

multisensory therapy and relies on the active involvement of parents.

We sincerely thank the generosity of the boutiques that joined this initiative: Alexander Piazza di Spagna, Artificial, Battistoni Roma, Cromia, Damiani, Dan Rome, Davide Cenci, Ecriteau Roma, Eufemi Stampe Antiche, Giansanti Gioielli d'Autore, Hausmann & Co., Lisio Tessuti, Longchamp Paris, My Style Bags, Peppino Capuano, Peroso Gioiellieri Rome since 1891, Pomellato, Sermoneta Gloves, Spirito Gioielli.

We would also like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Francesca Tagliacozzo and Mr. Gianni Battistoni. We would also like to thank Mrs. Pina Carbone for her collaboration and Colonel Genaro Cuccurullo for his generosity.



Veruschka and Roberto Wirth Junior with Gianni Battistoni (Mauro Biasini's photo)

# 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](http://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](http://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: KFBUS 10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10020. It is very important that you make sure to indi-

cate 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](http://www.kbfus.org)

[eng.cabss.it](http://eng.cabss.it)



**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](http://www.cabss.org)

E-mail: [info@cabss.it](mailto:info@cabss.it)

Tax Number: 97350450587

**Director:** Giustino Ruggieri

**Editor:** Stefania Fadda

**Writers:** Giusy Caravello, Marta Cidronelli, Laura Harripersad

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