

# THE FIRST STEP...



## Dear Readers,

I would like to open this edition of our newsletter by letting you know that "Il Museo degli Errori", an interactive and bilingual app, in Italian Sign Language (LIS) and Italian Written Language will be available soon. The app was conceived and illustrated by Silvia Palmieri, our 2014/2015 "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" Scholar. The App is inspired by the stories of children's author Gianni Rodari and has a fun museum tour guide that will surely be a surprise to all its users.

This year CABSS had the honor of being present at the "DeafPlus", International Conference held in March in Austria. Dr. Stefania Fadda, the Director of CABSS, presented two posters entitled "Cognition, Emotions and Learning in Deafblind Children" and "Promoting Concept Development in Children with CHARGE SYNDROME", which reflected the positive development of many deafblind children who follow the CABSS early intervention model.

We had the pleasure of hosting Talia Mango, winner of the

2018/2019 Fulbright scholarship in "Deafness Studies" who did an internship at CABSS from January to June 2019. Talia is a graduate from Boston College who decided to specialize in the field of deafblindness. She studied the impact of early intervention on deafblind communication under the supervision of CABSS. We decided to interview her for our readers before she returned to the United States. You can read more about her experience in the section dedicated to activities and projects.

As one student finishes her studies in Rome another is getting ready to fly to Washington to study at Gallaudet University. I am pleased to announce that the winner of the 2019/2020 "Fulbright - Roberto Wirth" Scholarship is Susanna Ricci Bitti. Starting in August, Susanna will study the bilingual education model (Sign Language and Spoken/Written Language) applied in the United States in hopes of developing and implementing an innovative bilingualism project for Italian deaf

children 0 to 6 years of age.

On the fundraising front, CABSS was the protagonist of three wonderful events, a burraco tournament organized in collaboration with Gianni Battistoni and Francesca Tagliacozzo, Italia Squista's Spezial Party and the XXX edition of the Gala delle Margherite which raised money to support the early intervention programs at CABSS and to allow new children the opportunity to benefit from these programs.

Before leaving you, I would like to inform you of an interesting article in this edition dedicated to Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), a neurological condition that affects the vision of the child.

kindest Regards!



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# SCIENTIFIC AREA

## DeafPlus, the CABSS Model for children who are deafblind and with CHARGE Syndrome

Our director, Stefania Fadda, had the pleasure of representing CABSS at the International "DeafPlus" Conference, held on the 28th and 29th of March, 2019 in Linz (Austria). Hundreds of professionals and experts from all over the world met to discuss the issue of individuals who are deaf with special needs and how they could promote their development.

The conference was organized by Dr. Johannes Fellingner, the head of the prestigious Institute for Neurology of Senses and Language, located at the St. John of God hospital in Linz. Mr. Fellingner sits on the Executive Board of the European Society for Mental Health and Deafness (ESMHD), presided by Doctor Fadda.

"We have had the privilege to witness the development of deaf people with special needs over the past 20 years" - said Dr. Fellingner - "We took this as an occasion to invite to an international conference in order to learn from each other and to get inspired by topics such as: how to foster developmental potentialities (of deaf individuals with special needs); communication and social development; quality of life, physical and mental health; management of challenging behaviours."

CABSS had the privilege, in the past, of witnessing the positive development of many deafblind children, thanks to the model of early intervention developed and utilized under the guidance of Dr. Fadda. Dr. Fellingner's invitation to CABSS to share their experience and model of CABSS with an international audience was enthusiastically received with the presentation of two posters, "Cognition, Emotions and Learning in Deafblind Children" and "Promoting Concept Development in Children with CHARGE SYNDROME", by Dr. Stefania Fadda, Giusy Caravello, Marta Cidronelli and Laura Harripersad.

The first poster focused on the needs of congenital deafblind children in different areas of development. Development cannot occur if we do not intervene early on in life. These chil-

dren often run the risk of becoming totally isolated, a condition that today is the reality of the majority of deafblind people in Italy roughly about 108,000 out of 189,000 identified by an ISTAT survey in 2016. The CABSS model, unique in Italy, provides multisensory early intervention programs, designed specifically to meet the needs of each individual child. These programs, starting from the four main impacted by deafblindness (Anticipation,

One child in 10,000 is born with CHARGE Syndrome and before the age of 3 can face about 10 surgeries. Most of these children have vision loss, hearing loss and balance problems that can cause developmental and communication delays. It is probable that children with CHARGE present deficits in every sensory modality, not only in the visual and auditory modality, and manifest stimulatory behaviors.

CABSS helps children with CHARGE Syndrome by supporting them in developing communication skills and regulating behavior that arise as a result of physical pain, sensory issues and/or anxiety.



Stefania Fadda with the poster "Cognition, Emotions and Learning in Deafblind Children"

Motivation, Communication and Confirmation), ensures that every child is given the information needed in their communication modality in order to develop skills and abilities to be used in everyday life and in all contexts. At CABSS children learn to express their personality and emotions, use their residual senses (visual, auditory and/or tactile) to learn about the world, develop gross motor and fine motor skills, proprioceptive and vestibular senses and, in particular, cognitive (problem solving, development of concepts, cause and effect), social and communication skills.

The second poster was dedicated to children with CHARGE Syndrome, one of the major causes of deafblindness. It is a genetic disorder that involves multiple sensory, physical and behavioral anomalies.



Stefania Fadda with the poster "Promoting Concept Development in Children with CHARGE SYNDROME"



## Cortical Visual Impairments (CVI)

### About CVI

Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) is a neurological impairment that affects a child's vision. CVI is caused by damage to any part of the brain that relates to visual processing. Individuals with CVI do not typically have ocular irregularities, but CVI may be seen with other disorders such as Strabismus. Individuals can be born with CVI or it can be acquired through trauma to the central nervous system. Cortical Visual Impairment occurs at a high rate among children with multiple disabilities, children with Cerebral Palsy, and children with developmental disabilities. It is frequently seen alongside motor, cognitive, and physical disabilities as well.

### Curriculum

Children with CVI may present with visual behaviors such as visual latency, light gazing behaviors, visual novelty, and visual curiosity. Due to these visual behaviors, Cortical Visual Impairments can frequently be misinterpreted as a lack of motivation in the child. However, children with CVI are very motivated and capable.

Every child with CVI is different. Therefore, it is important to ask what a particular child may want or need in the classroom. There are many teaching and intervention strategies that may be beneficial for children diagnosed with CVI. In the classroom, low lighting should be used to avoid distraction from bright ceiling lights. Often times, it is possible to use a light cover in a color such as blue to dim the harshness of overhead lighting.

Children with CVI may show a preference for bright colors such as red and yellow as well as bright lights and shiny objects. The use of highly preferred colors against high contrast backgrounds when teaching is ideal. Items should be presented with the use of visual simplicity, such as one or two large items shown at a time against a black background. Additionally, there should be consistency during classroom and learning activities, so children are able to anticipate what may occur during a lesson. Children with CVI may need extended response times and benefit from frequent repetition throughout all lessons. With the appropriate accommodations, children with CVI are able to be successful members of the classroom community.

Source: <https://nei.nih.gov/faqs/cortical-visual-impairment-cvi>



A little girl with CVI  
Picture from the Perkins School for the Blind

### Diagnosis

CVI can be difficult to diagnose due to the lack of ocular irregularities and high rate of additional disabilities. The diagnosis of CVI occurs through medical examination and neuroimaging. The early diagnosis of CVI is essential to early interventions.



A little boy with CVI  
Picture from the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children

# ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

## Susanna Ricci Bitti, the new “Fulbright - Roberto Wirth” Scholar

We are happy to present the winner of the 2019/2020 “Fulbright - Roberto Wirth” Scholar, Susanna Ricci Bitti. The new scholar was selected by The U. S. - Italy Fulbright Commission. The selection committee is comprised of experts in Deafness, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United States Embassy and Gallaudet University, located in Washington D.C in the U.S.

In August Gallaudet University will welcome the eager scholar who will study the bilingual education model (Sign Language and Spoken/Written Language) that is utilized in the United States. She hopes to apply this knowledge to create an innovative project for Italian deaf children 0-6 years of age.

Susanna Ricci Bitti is Deaf and has a degree in Science and Communication Technology from La Sapienza University of Rome. Her preparation, strong curiosity and daily commitment to the field of deafness is

impressive, both on a national and international level: the new scholar



*The new “Fulbright - Roberto Wirth” scholar Susanna Ricci Bitti*

did an internship at the European Union of the Deaf Belgium in

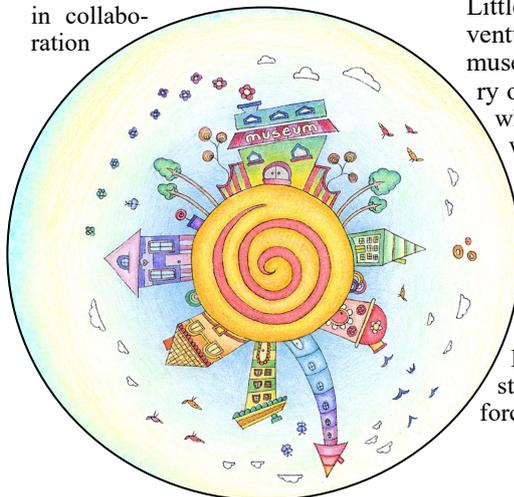
“Communication and Media Office” and for years has worked as an editor with Il Treno Soc. Coop. Soc.le Onlus, contributing to the creation of bilingual materials in Italian Sign Language (LIS) for Italian deaf children. In particular, Susanna oversaw the editorial project of, “Sordi: ieri e oggi” which is a comic book series and the creation of two bilingual hardcover books, “I giochi” and “In campagna”, in the “Primi Segni” series. She is currently the National Vice President of the Young Italian Deaf Committee.

The combination of her education, experience and now as the winner of the “Fulbright - Roberto Wirth” scholarship will definitely give her all the tools and resources that she will need to make an impact in the lives of deaf Italian children, who, will be eagerly awaiting her return from the United States!

## Coming soon: The “Il Museo degli Errori” App!

CABSS is happy to announce that “Il Museo degli Errori” App will soon be available. It is an interactive, bilingual (Italian Sign Language (LIS) / Written Italian) story-book app.

Created and illustrated by our 2014/2015 Fulbright-Roberto Wirth scholar, Silvia Palmieri. The app was also created thanks to CABSS in collaboration



*An imagine taken from the “Il Museo degli Errori” App*

with the Motion Light Lab of the Visual Language and Visual Learning Science of Learning Center at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. (U.S.A.).

“Il Museo degli Errori” App was inspired by the unique, colorful, outlandish stories of Gianni Rodari where fantasy becomes reality. Little readers are taken on an adventure with the help of a very fun museum tour guide in the discovery of incredible places and people where everything is “perfectly wrong”!

Thanks to the visual narrative format children can choose to watch the story in LIS or read the story in Italian. Children who watch the story in LIS are exposed to fun word games in Italian Sign Language that act to stimulate their creativity and reinforce their linguistic abilities. Chil-

dren who choose to read the story in Italian have the opportunity to experience the story interactively and have access to a glossary with words that they can access just by clicking on the word which immediately connects the them to a video that fingerspells the word and gives the sign for the word in Italian Sign Language.

During Ms. Palmieri’s time at Gallaudet University as a “Fulbright - Roberto Wirth” Scholar, she was also able to create and illustrate the “The Museum of Errors” App in American Sign Language (ASL) and Written English which is currently available on the Apple app store.



## CABSS welcomes Talia Mango, the 2018/2019 Fulbright Scholar

*Talia Mango is the winner of the 2018/2019 Fulbright Scholarship in "Deafness Studies" that is awarded to American students that would like to conduct research, to teach, and/or collaborate on new projects in deafness-related fields in Italy. After obtaining her degree in "Severe and Multiple Disabilities" from Boston College, Talia decided to specialize in the area of Deafblindness and, thanks to the Fulbright Scholarship, she was able to accomplish her objective of studying the impact of early intervention on deafblindness communication under the supervision of CABSS. We had the pleasure of having Talia with us from January to June and we wanted to interview her for our newsletter before she goes back to the United States.*

**Hi Talia, let's talk a little your education and experience before winning the Fulbright scholarship. What made you decide to pursue a career in deafblindness?**

I became interested in the field of deafblindness after an internship I had at Perkins School for the Blind while earning my undergraduate degree. I had always been interested in American Sign Language (ASL) and braille, and I realized that deafblindness was a field where I could contribute both of these skills.

**During your internship under the supervision of CABSS you carried out a project in the area of deafblindness. Could you briefly describe it?**

My project analyzed the impact of early intervention services on the communicative development of children with deafblindness. For the project, I conducted pre- and post-testing of the children involved with the Communication Matrix and observed the intervention sessions on a weekly basis through the video camera. The project focused on how the children's ability to communicate

conventionally and symbolically progressed over the course of time.

**What did you learn about early intervention for children who are deafblind during your time at CABSS?**

While at CABSS I was able to learn about the benefits of effective parental involvement when providing early intervention. CABSS is the first time I have seen parents entirely included into their child's intervention sessions, and I feel that it not only cultivates an open line of communication between the parents and interventionists, but it additionally allows parents to streamline what occurs in intervention sessions and home.

**How are you planning to utilize what you have learned at CABSS when you're back in the States?**

I plan to utilize what I have learned at CABSS within my own career as an educator of deafblind children in the United States by fostering an environment in which parents feel more involved in the education of their child.

**What do you like about Italy?**

The ease in which you can travel within Italy by train! Due to this, I was able to



take the train to different cities throughout the country on the weekends.

**Think of a motto that best describe you.**

"Do the best you can until you know better. When you know better, do better" - Maya Angelou

**Thanks Talia, all the Staff at CABSS were very happy to have you join the team and wish you much success in the future in pursuing your dreams!**



Talia Mango, the 2018/2019 Fulbright Scholar

# FUNDRAISING

## Galà delle Margherite, 2019 edition dedicated to CABSS

"When you dream by yourself, a dream is only a dream, dreaming together, makes a dream a reality". These are the words of Bianca Maria Caringi Lucibelli, words that have stayed true to her since the first edition of the Galà delle Margherite. Today, after 30 years, she is still active in organizing one of the most recognized charitable events in Rome.



*The logo of the XXX edition of the Galà delle Margherite*

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Galà attracted the attention of VIPs and the media. The spectacular thirtieth edition was held at the Hotel Excelsior on Via Veneto, where the atmosphere of the Dolce Vita could still be felt. One of the characteristics of the Galà delle Margherite is the focus on giving and fundraising. This year Mrs. Lucibelli decided to make CABSS the beneficiary.

The hosts of the evening were Nino Graziano Luca, from RAI, and Manuela Macaroni, former judge of the RAI program "Verdetto Finale". Guests were greeted by a cascade of daisies scattered on the floor of the Excelsior and the enchanting music of harpist Giovanna Ofelia Bernardelli.

After the aperitif Azzurra Lucibelli, also known as ZUA, opened the evening by singing, "Never Enough" by Loren Allred with her beautiful voice. Soon after, Elena Bonelli performed several songs in honor of the famous musician, Ennio Morricone.

After a fashion show by Via della Spiga Milano fashion house, a concert by Maestro Jacopo Sipari di Pescasseroli, "Amore dopo Amore", was held accompanied by the Symphonic Orchestra Europa Musica

Renzo Renzi and the voices of the soprano Silvana Froli and the Ukrainian Tenor Vitaliy Kovalchuk.

Many distinguished guests were present that evening: the President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani accompanied by his wife Brunella Discoteca, Tonino Boccadamo President of Boccadamo Gioielli, Alessandra Canale from Rai, Press Agent Emilio Sturla Fur-

nò, Luca Iannarone of the Interflora Company, Fashion Designer Anna Fendi, journalist Paola Zanoni and Marquis Giuseppe Ferrajoli. We are also pleased to mention the presence of former Austrian Ambassador Christian Berlakoviz, Stylists Maria Lorenza, Massimo Bomba and Ilian Rachov, Prefects Gianni Ietto and Fulvio Rocco, Lawyer Maria Carla Ciccioriccio, Journalist Mariella Anziano and Vania Contadini of TG3.

All guests were given a gift by Tuscan Designer, Emanuela Biffoli, who is attentive to the needs of the sophisticated woman who loves herself and who is not afraid to take risks.

At the end of the evening a huge daisy - shaped cake made its triumphant entrance, where hundreds of people gathered around to embrace Bianca Maria Caringi Lucibelli who was visibly very emotional at the time. She wanted to take a moment to remember Mother Teresa of Calcutta and quoted: "Love cannot remain by itself - it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action, and that action is service." These beautiful words fit perfectly with the mission that for 30 years has characterized the Galà delle Margherite.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Bianca Maria Caringi Lucibelli, her untiring staff and our special patroness of the evening Gioia Marina Pasquinelli Furlan. Heartfelt thanks also to the ladies of the Honorary Committee who have supported CABSS for many years: Laura Azzali, Manuela Nicoletti Brusadelli, Carina Courtright and Veruschka Wirth.



*From left to right: Stefania Fadda, Roberto Wirth, Nino Graziano Luca, Azzurra Lucibelli, Bianca Maria Caringi Lucibelli and Manuela*



## Gourmet Party in favor of CABSS: Spezial Party 2019

On Monday, April 8th, 2019 Italia Squisita's spring and spice - flavored party, Spezial Party, returned once again to Rome. The most awaited charitable gourmet event of the year took place at the Palazzetto where more than 30 protagonists of Italian haute cuisine gathered in favor of CABSS.

Chefs from all over Italy shared their dishes, desserts and drinks, bringing joy, taste and fun to all who attended the event. With a small contribution guests were able to savor tasty delicacies, speak with chefs and discover the new trends in mixology.

Like the previous editions, spices

have been the protagonists of the ItaliaSquisita spring festival dedicated to CABSS, a kaleidoscope of Italian haute cuisine presented utilizing a multitude of spices and products of excellence.

This year there was a new addition to the party, a remarkable chef that has made his mark in Italian cuisine, Chef Vito Quarto. Quarto is from Città della Pieve in Umbria, where he is the chef of Restaurant Zafferano at Hotel Vannucci. At this year's Spezial Party he presented his famous recipe for liver patè with vinsanto in lard, saffron bread and caper fruit.



*Liver patè with vinsanto in lard, saffron bread and caper fruit by Chef Vito Quarto - Restaurant Zafferano (Hotel Vannucci, Città della Pieve - Perugia)*



*Roberto Wirth, Fiorella Baserga, Veruschka Wirth, Roberto Wirth Junior, Stefania Fadda and all the chefs of the 2019 Spezial Party*

Thanks to all the chefs, pastry chefs and mixologists: Francesco Apreda, Stefano Chinappi, Sarah Cicolini, Ornella de Felice, Federico Delmonte, Nicola Fossaceca, Claudio Gargioli, Vitantonio Lombardo, Stefano Marzetti, Giuseppe Milana, Luciano Monosilio, Marco Nuzzo, Vito Quarto, Marcello Romano, Maurizio Serva, Giulio Terrinoni, Angelo Troiani, Daniele Usai, Antonio Ziantoni, Perdaniele Seu, Stefano Callegari, Salvatore Salvo, Domenico Stile, Luca Ludovici, Matteo Zamberlan, Stefano Santucci and Fabrizio Avello.

## Burraco Charity Tournament

In February, 2019, a burraco charity tournament was held in favor of CABSS at the splendid Hotel Hassler.

Roberto Wirth, Gianni Battistoni and Francesca Tagliacozzo joined forces once again in organizing this year's tournament which brought many people out to the gaming tables. The evening was full of healthy competition, suspense and fun.

The winning couple won a dinner for two at Imàgo, Hassler's panoramic restaurant with its breathtaking view of the city. The second runners - up were given two beauty cases from Battistoni and third place winners won a pair of AmorVero perfumes.

At the end of the tournament a raffle was held with the proceeds going to CABSS for the expansion of their early intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children. All programs

at CABSS are individualized and carried out in the "Il Primo Passo ..." multisensory laboratory. The programs are based on an innovative method that was inspired by the Canadian Intervention Model and the Principles of Multisensory Therapy which thrives on active parental involvement.

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to the generosity of the many boutiques that supported the initiative: Angeletti Roma, Giorgio Armani, Bulgari, Peppino Capuano, Eleuteri, Federico Buccellati, Salvatore Ferragamo, Gucci, Hausmann & Co., ISAIA Napoli, Massoni, Prada, Francesco Rogani.



*The President of CABSS Onlus Roberto Wirth*

# FUNDRAISING

## Support us!

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**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: KBFUS 10 Rockfeller 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)



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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**

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