

Dear Readers

I am delighted to present our new newsletter, 'Right on Target': the name testifying our desire to be on target with our every activity that supports deaf and hearing children! Our newsletter is launched at a historic time as the Council of Ministers, following a proposal by the Minister of Social Solidarity, Paolo Ferrero, recently approved the DDL on recognising Italian Sign Language (LIS) in a recent UN convention in New York on the rights of the persons with disabilities. This is an important step towards lowering the invisible but existing communication barriers that do not permit deaf people to be fully integrated into schools and society. The full article can be read on our website.

It is my hope that this newsletter will keep you well informed of our activities and will give you an insight into the deaf world. Right on Target is the result of a year's work. The year 2007 has been particularly intense and varied. Our new Marketing Director, Sile O'Broin has raised the pulse of the Fund's activities. We have seen many new fundraising events organised for our projects: the Fun Run in Villa Ada and an evening cruise on the river Tiber to name a few which are described in the following pages.

I wish everyone an enjoyable read and I hope to meet with you soon at one of our many events in the future.



Roberto Wirth
President

SPORTING EVENT AT VILLA ADA

A sporting event at Villa Ada to benefit deaf children

Ready, get set, go! This is how the Sunday morning of June 10, 2007 kicked off in Villa Ada, one of Rome's most beautiful parks. "Feel the rhythm of your steps" was the slogan of the first Fun Run to benefit deaf children, and with a good turnout of around 500 people, united in solidarity and just plain fun – children and adults, deaf and hearing. The event was organized with the Leprotti of Villa Ada; an association of running aficionados that for the past fifteen years has carried out free, technical and fitness related consulting for activities associated with track and field.



Two races were held, one for children, around the small lake, and one for adults over a distance of 6 kilometres. For the adult's race, the first three winners were deaf, with third place going to Roberto Wirth himself! All of the kids got small medals, since they are all winners for having taken part in the race.

"This is a first step", explains Roberto Wirth, "in a wider-reaching sporting project, which will see the creation of new, free courses in track and field, accessible to the deaf within a concept of integrated sports."

The event was of notable significance both before and after, thanks to an intense promotional

evening (on the website www.sordionline.com). The ENS, as you may well know, is a non-profit organization, for the protection and assistance of the deaf, and their integration into society. Sordionline is a portal for communication and information for deaf people, and sets out to prove how deaf people are capable of accomplishing everything; the Roberto Wirth Fund aims to achieve the same goal, but in order for deaf people to arrive at such point, it is necessary to begin to work hard at an early age: our objective, therefore, is to provide adequate support for the training of children. With this in mind, Roberto Wirth, during his speech on the boat, remarked, "I, profoundly deaf from birth, am the living proof that if we give our deaf children the tools necessary for development and autonomy, we are truly capable of doing absolutely everything... except hear!"

ADVENTURES IN THE CITY

Summer Recreational Centre 2007

This year the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus has been a major supporter of the Summer Recreation activities of "Il Treno".

"Summer Adventures in the City" is a project for deaf and hearing young people between the ages of 4 and 13.

The idea of offering deaf children the opportunity to access an educational sports program together with their hearing peers is part of a larger program that encourages a fully integrated educational environment that, in the end, benefits both deaf and hearing children.

The Program is also aimed at assisting the families of deaf children in July, when schools have closed for the summer, and working parents are faced with the problem of what to do to keep their children occupied.

This Activity took place between 2 and 20 July: three one-week sessions, each of which was made up of three groups of different age ranges. Families could sign up their children for one or

more sessions. The Sports center was the Fulvio Bernardini sporting facilities on Via dell'Acqua Marcia 15, in Rome.

The goal is to improve sports skills, educate and entertain with new and engaging recreational games and activities. During the mornings the children swam and played water games, climbed, practiced archery, skateboard, volleyball tournaments, basketball, mini-tennis, five-a-side soccer and ping-pong. During the afternoons the focus was on expressive-manual workshops (workshops of LIS, theatre workshops, cooking, art using found objects, comics, and drawing).

Qualified deaf and hearing communication and education assistants were available at all times.



Mosaic project - The Museum Enters the Class and the Class Enters the Museum

Cossato, Piedmont – on the heels of the first successful experience in Rome during 2006 at the ISS Public School for deaf and hearing children, the Roberto Wirth Fund recreated this project in the north of Italy, in the Piedmont Region in April and May led by a deaf art educator and historian, Carlo Di Biase, former Roberto Wirth scholarship grantee, and by his assistant, Chiara Sparviero, a deaf architect student.

These encounters are part of the special project "The Museum Enters the Class and the Class



Enters the Museum”, aimed at making an incisive contribution to enabling deaf children to access museums as part of their school program. It is a unique initiative, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York.

The project is comprised of four modules, the first of which is entitled “Mosaics”. In Rome, the theme was Mosaics of Ancient Rome and in Piedmont, Medieval Mosaics in the Piedmont Region (which mirror ancient Roman mosaics). The Piedmont experience was with the Cossato Elementary school and the Cathedral of St.Evasio of Casale Monferrato.

There were three phases of the project: first, the children learned about the history and art of mosaics and were taught the basic techniques. Then three classes went by bus to see the mosaics they had studied at the Museum and Cathedral and then went back to school where they carried out the third phase, the actual creation of mosaics.

The project culminated in an exhibit of their creative and colourful mosaics at a large festival in the City of Cossato called “The City is All Mine”, on 26 May, to which family members as well as the general public were invited.

There were 74 children from the Cossato School of whom 10 were deaf. The school was enthusiastic. The Principal commented that all the tiles used by the children of the Cossato School

were generously donated by Bisazza (www.bisazza.it), an Italian factory and world leader in the production of mosaics.

Carlo Di Biase and Hollie Ecker, art historian, access consultant, and Italian Fulbright grantee, created the Project “The Museum Enters the Class and the Class Enters the Museum”. Just prior to the Project in the Piedmont Region, they were invited to present the project in seminar form to the members, and guests of the historic Italian Cultural Association (ACI) in Turin. Invited as well were various Museums from the Region. The seminar highlighted the mosaic project and spoke to the problem of access to art for deaf children in the integrated school environment.

Materials will be created so that teachers of schools all over Italy will be able to insert these modules in their school curriculum. The Cossato School was enthusiastic. The Principal commented, “this activity truly has improved access to art. The two leaders were skilful in adapting their language to various ages, and the children were in the end able to create a real mosaic. They are still talking about it. We are eagerly looking forward to the next module!”

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