

# right on target

Spring 2008 N° 2

Roberto Wirth Fund ONLUS newsletter



Dear Readers,

I'd like to wish all of you a peaceful 2008 with our second issue of "Right on Target", with the hope that this will be a year that is right on target for everyone.

While our commitment in Italy deepens, on the other side of the ocean we have recently created an association in New York "A Sense of Wirth", to promote deaf and deafblind activities, educational and artistic experiences, and communications and awareness programs. The association will be collaborating closely with us, and will train deaf teachers to teach English to deaf students from all over the world so that they can compete better in the labour market. Other initiatives include scholarships for graduates in deaf and deafblind education, and an extraordinary project for visual arts education, to be run in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Finally, I would like to announce the latest development here at the Roberto Wirth Fund Onlus: **online donations!** It is now possible to donate through our web site [www.robertowirthfund.net](http://www.robertowirthfund.net): a simple and quick way to be right on target!



Roberto Wirth  
President

## **DEAFSPACE: Communication & Visual Arts**

*Bringing deaf and hearing communities closer within a context of full integration and mutual enrichment.*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century building of the former slaughterhouse in Rome, the Roberto Wirth Fund

is working towards the creation of DEAFSPACE: a new cultural public space for the communication and visual arts of the deaf worldwide. This space will open to the public the work of deaf artists: dance, theatre, cinema, poetry, photography, art, graphic design and sculpture where everyone can discover their potential and the richness of visual communication. There will be permanent as well as temporary exhibits.

One of the key words of DEAFSPACE is **accessibility** in communication. Indeed, Italian and English, and sign language will accompany actors, directors, choreographers and dance troupes in their performances and presentations, and workshops for children and adults. Furthermore, DEAFSPACE will offer a series of "tasters" of sign language and targeted short courses specially aimed at personnel in museum and art galleries so as to raise awareness of what sensorial accessibility entails in these artistic public spaces.

## DEAFSPACE

communication and visual arts

### **Striking a harmonious note at Christmas**

*Fundraising concert in the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Lucina and Hotel Hassler for DEAFSPACE*

December 2007: With the delightful capital city of Rome as a backdrop, the Swiss-Italian tenor Fausto Tenzi sang a vast variety of religious and Christmas songs, accompanied by the "Voci Bianche di Roma" youth choir of the National Academy of Santa Cecilia, directed by J. Maria Sciutta. The children delighted the audience with their innocence and sweetness, adding a touch of magic to the entire evening.

Surrounded by such a variety of Christmas sights and sounds, 250 guests enjoyed the unforgettable evening. Celebrities, sponsors and ambassadors attended the concert, including Princess Victoria Windisch de Graetz, who hosted the evening, actress Anna Kanakis, the Chinese Ambassador, and the Assistant Prosecutor of the Juvenile Courts, Simonetta Matone.

The Christmas Concert took place, thanks to our many sponsors, and particular thanks go to Amplifon and Unicredit (for a complete list of sponsors, please see [www.deafspace.org](http://www.deafspace.org)). This event raised 25,000 euros, which will allow us to begin the programme of DEAFSPACE.



*The youth choir of the Santa Cecilia Academy sing for the guests at the Christmas concert*

December was an intensive month for our staff and volunteers who generously donated their time at FNAC at the Porta di Roma shopping centre in December where they wrapped gifts to raise funds for DEAFSPACE. Thanks to everyone involved we were able to raise awareness and raise approximately 3,700 euros, of which 450 euros came from the sale of snow globes, kindly made and donated by FNAC. The amount raised brings us a step closer to reaching our goal.

## **Roberto Wirth Fund runs so that deaf people can donate blood...**

October 2007: The Pincio in Villa Borghese and the wonderful panorama of the eternal city were the perfect backdrops for the sixth "Blood Runner" ([www.bloodrunner.it](http://www.bloodrunner.it)), a race organised by the Blood Runner Association to collect blood donations. In Rome and the Lazio region, blood donations are under target by 17,000 units with respect to hospital needs.

This was the first time in Italy that deaf people could donate blood and with clear communication between donors and the medical staff, in full compliance of all the legal requirements with regard to donating blood. (If medical staff are unable to communicate with a potential donor, the person is not allowed to donate blood). Mr. Augusto Battaglia, Lazio Region's health councillor, stated, "Thanks to the Roberto Wirth Fund, this is the first time deaf people can donate blood without the past communication difficulties. Deaf donors have helped us to reach our self-sufficiency target for 2008".



*Corrado D'Aversa, President of Gruppo Silis and one of the deaf donors; Silvia Del Vecchio, LIS interpreter; Anna Roatta; Dr Massimo Migliaccio, President of Blood Runner; Sile Montezemolo O'Broin; Roberto Wirth*

You can help us reach our target by donating your **5X1000** in your tax declaration. Our Codice Fiscale is **97350450587**. All funds raised from 5X1000 will go to creating DEAFSPACE.

Deaf donors had the assistance of a deaf postgraduate doctor, Anna Roatta from Turin who, used sign language, and also a LIS interpreter that interpreted for donors and nurses.

Roberto Wirth reiterated the need for future projects to involve deaf people in blood donations. *'In every city, in at least one Local Health Authority, it should be possible for deaf people, by appointment, to donate blood either in the presence of a doctor who can communicate through sign language, or alternatively, in the presence of a sign language interpreter'.*

### **Seminar and presentation of the booklet "Introduction to Usher syndrome" in collaboration with Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. and the Rome Institute for the Deaf**

November 2007: The aim of this project is to raise awareness of a rare genetic condition that causes the gradual loss of sight in 3 - 6% of the deaf community.

Professor Steven D. Collins of Gallaudet University and Patrizia Ceccarani, Educational Rehabilitation Director of the Lega del Filo d'Oro, illustrated the consequences of deafblindness on the social and daily lives of the people it affects. Patrizia Ceccarani also presented the results of a European study, which was part of the project "CAUSE", focused on raising cross-European awareness of both Usher syndrome and CHARGE. According to this research, the fundamental factors through which people with Usher syndrome can reach and maintain independence in their daily lives are through having access to practical assistance, professional support networks, and strong motivation. This is despite the fact that they live with such a difficult challenge.

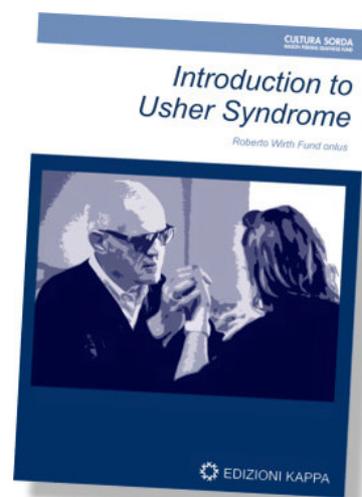
Amerigo Iannola, member of the Lega del Filo D'Oro and Maria Costanza Bacianini gave short presentations on how they deal with being deafblind and the issue of integration in the environment in which they live. Maria Costanza attends the Deruta Institute of Art, and her life is typical of most girls of her age: she goes out with her friends (both deafblind and hearing), she goes to the beach and she goes dancing. She communicates with her friends through Tactile Sign Language.

The seminar concluded with the presentation of the booklet - *An Introduction to Usher syndrome*. The booklet provides an accessible, general description of the syndrome, and addresses themes relating to diagnosis, communication and adaptation. Printing of the booklet was also made possible thanks to a donation by the Lions Club "Circolo Accademia" of Rome. The booklet is available in Braille (Italian).

For a free copy of **An Introduction to Usher syndrome** by James Edge and Akiko Matsumoto ("Deaf Culture - Mason Perkins Deafness Fund" Edizione Kappa). The booklet is also available in Braille.

Visit our office or send a self-addressed A4 envelope with stamps to the value of €2.20.

You can also download the booklet in Italian and English from our website.



## 'The Museum enters the class, and the class enters the museum' - Spas of Ancient Rome

January 2008: With the mosaics of ancient Rome project completed, we are set to launch the second module on "The Spas of Ancient Rome", a voyage and discovery of art in a context of accessibility and integration between deaf and hearing children and also of bilingualism (Italian sign language and spoken Italian). This year we will be working once again with I.S.I.S.S. primary schools in Rome and the school of Cossato (Bi).

Once again, I.S.I.S.S. will dedicate a week of intensive study to this second module of the Project, alternating lessons on theory with fun practical activities. They will travel back in time to the world of the Ancient Romans to learn about their ancestors' habits, customs and... plumbing techniques! During the lessons a LIS interpreter will assist the art experts.



To raise funds for this project we introduced our first Christmas Card Campaign aimed at companies and individuals. The cards were drawn by deaf children, who had participated in the Museum Project. They let their imagination run wild to come up with wonderful and colourful designs. A selection was chosen for our Christmas cards, providing a more personal and unusual touch in giving season's greetings.

The Christmas card campaign raised €4,480. We would like to thank Europcar ([www.europcar.it](http://www.europcar.it)) and ZTE Italy ([www.zteitaly.com](http://www.zteitaly.com)).



Get in touch for more information about ordering your Christmas cards for 2008!

## Cinema Without Barriers

February 2008: The Roberto Wirth Fund is proud to partner with the historic Cinema Farnese in another pioneer project: Cinema Without Barriers. This project will allow deaf and deafblind children and adults to enjoy quality entertainment along with their hearing peers. Cinema Farnese is the first in Rome and the second in Italy (following Cinema Oberdan in Milan) to offer such a service, which is without doubt a socio-cultural revolution that aims to break down not only sensory barriers but also misconceptions in the minds of the public. Cinema Without Barriers means that everyone can enjoy the same film together at the same time.

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