

# Right on target

## CABSS ONLUS newsletter

Dear readers

I would like to open this issue of the newsletter with a special thanks to the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, who presented CABSS with a medal of representation at our Christmas event in 2012. For us, this prestigious recognition of the work that has been carried out for years in favor of deaf and deafblind children and their families was such a great honor.

The positive results we have obtained thus far were made possible thanks to the hard work and dedication of the professionals at CABSS and all who believe in our mission. As president, my wish is that in 2013 CABSS will see continued growth in services and programs making it possible to reach out to many more deaf and deafblind children, giving a smile to every child and parent who comes to the center. You can support our activities by donating your 5 per mille, a gesture that costs nothing but gives many opportunities to deaf and deafblind children. To find out how, please see the section dedicated to 5 per mille in this edition of Right on Target.

I would also like to thank the Fondazione Banco di Sardegna who has made a contribution in 2012/2013 to the "Comunicare Con-Tatto" early intervention program for children who are deafblind. The foundation focuses on public and social interests in the areas of: scientific research and

training, art, conservation and valorization of cultural and environmental goods, health, and assistance to the socially disadvantaged ([www.fondazionebancodisardegna.it](http://www.fondazionebancodisardegna.it)).

I would also like to announce with pride that the "Roberto Wirth" scholarship has become a part of the prestigious Fulbright Program gaining international recognition and securing the future of successive "Fulbright-Roberto Wirth" scholars.



Enjoy!



Roberto E. Wirth



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# Scientific articles

## International Speakers: Christine "Coco" Roschaert and Laura Ann Petitto

CABSS in collaboration with the Istituto Statale per Sordi di Roma (ISSR) had the honor of welcoming two extraordinary internationally acclaimed speakers, Doctor Christine "Coco" Roschaert and Doctor Laura Ann Petitto.



On the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, 2012, Doctor Roschaert spoke about the future of deafblind children using herself as an example, making specific reference to her own personal experience of being affected by Usher's Syndrome, Type 1, at the age of eight. She is Canadian born and a graduate from Gallaudet University. She is currently the director of the Deafblind Nepal Project. Her determination has motivated her to travel around the world to defend the rights of individuals who are deafblind with the main goal of fighting for the right to an education.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 2012, Doctor Petitto, a cognitive neuroscientist and scientific director of the "Visual Language and Visual Learning Center (VL2)" at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. presented on "How young children discover language: Revolutionary Evidence from the Signing Child". She spoke about some of the important research she has carried out in the area of human language over a span of 37 years.



Her findings in particular focused on language and the cognitive capacity of chimpanzees and humans; early language acquisition, structure and how language is represented in the human brain. She discussed how sign language is acquired in individuals who are deaf, with reference to American Sign Language (ASL) and Quebecois Sign Language (LSQ). She also demonstrated how language is processed and organized in the brain of bilingual adults and children, highlighting key aspects of the advantages of the bilingual brain.

## CABSS in Portugal: Early Intervention for Deafblind Children: A Multisensory Approach

CABSS concluded 2012 by participating in an Open Day Event on "Mental Health of Deaf Individuals", held by the European Society for Mental Health and Deafness on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Lisbon, Portugal.

The objective of this initiative was to sensitize public opinion about Deafness and Mental Health and share theoretical and practical knowledge to Portuguese professionals in order to help improve services for individuals who are Deaf in Portugal.

The Open day event also welcomed presentations in the area of childhood deafblindness. Doctor Stefania Fadda presented on "Early intervention for deafblind children: a multisensory approach". Her presentation was received with much interest and was a great success. She illustrated how children who are deafblind 0-6 years of age at CABSS benefit from early intervention programs that utilize a multisensory approach.

development of communicative competencies often creating a situation that can result in significant delays in the learning process and the overall development of the child who is deafblind.

For children who are deafblind, it is crucial to have opportunities to learn how to use their senses from the very first months of life. For this reason, multisensory therapy is one of key elements used in the CABSS method. The method at CABSS is based on the Canadian intervention model and provides children who are deafblind with access to non-distorted information. The central figure in the intervention process is the intervenor, a professional specialized in deafblindness, whose role is to facilitate access to visual and auditory information and to promote communication and socio-emotional development in children who are deafblind.

The intervenor at CABSS uses multisensory therapy and specialized resources that are internationally recognized to plan individualized intervention programs that are focused on the specific needs of each child who is deafblind. Programs are carried out in the multisensory laboratory at CABSS where intervenors expose children to activities that utilize visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, vestibular and proprioceptive stimuli to promote language development, use of residual senses, social well-being and to develop skills and concepts.

Children who have been attending early intervention programs for children at CABSS have demonstrated significant progress in their ability to maximize their use of residual vision and hearing, communicate, use their tactile sense and interact with others.



Children who have a combined loss of vision and hearing often have difficulty interacting with the external world and interpreting information. These difficulties can impede the





# Activities and projects

## Early intervention at CABSS: Deaf and Deafblind children

The number of families of deaf and deafblind children who attend early intervention programs at CABSS is constantly growing. All early intervention programs utilize a multisensory approach, are implemented from the first months of life, respect the potential and needs of each child, are specialized, intensive, and involve parents.

The professionals at CABSS develop early intervention programs that are carried out in its multisensory laboratory, an environment inspired by the Snoezelen philosophy. The word "Snoezelen", is derived from the words "snuffelen" (sniffing) and "doezelen" (dozing), which indicates a use of a multisensory approach with the objective of helping the individual to perceive the world starting from self with the intention of engaging in authentic experience with others. The core of the philosophy states that the use of the five senses permits an individual to enter into synchrony with life, to create a dialogue with the surrounding world and be totally present in the "here" and "now".

Programs for deaf children are aimed at children 0-3 years old and children are followed closely by a professional at CABSS

who supports children, month by month, in achieving developmental milestones, acquiring an awareness of self, and interacting effectively with others.

Programs for deafblind children, as in its name, "Communicate with Touch", are directed to children 0-6 years of age with the objective of stimulating their communicative and linguistic development, with the use of a variety of communication forms with a main focus on the use of tactile sign language.

Up until this point, all children have made progress in their cognitive, affective-emotional and social development. They have made significant progress in the way they interact and communicate with others.



Early intervention at CABSS supports parent-child interactions and familial relationships. Parents are actively involved in all phases of the intervention process. They learn new communication methods and are able to effectively interact with their children. In particular, they develop the capacity to identify, interpret and respond to their children's needs. It has been seen at CABSS that parents develop a more positive attitude in regards to their child's potential and report a state of increasing emotional well-being.

CABSS believes that quality intervention also requires the collaboration of professionals who support children who are deaf and deafblind in all contexts (home, school, rehabilitation centers), and the coordination of different strategies in order to meet their specialized needs. During periodical meetings held with our staff, professionals who came to CABSS learned the necessary methods and communication techniques to interact effectively with the children they work with. CABSS collaborates with the Regional Center of Sant'Alessio Margherita di Savoia for the Blind and the ISSS (Istituto di Istruzione Specializzata per Sordi), and has established a collaborative agreement for 2012/2013 academic year.

### Italian Sign Language Laboratories, "LISSIAMO"

The Italian Sign Language Laboratories for the 2012/2013 academic school year, "LISSIAMO" were created by CABSS in collaboration with ISSS, Gruppo SILIS and Coop. Soc.le Onlus Il treno. The laboratories are being carried out at the ISSIS' preschool, primary and secondary schools.

The objectives of the laboratories are to reinforce the communicative and linguistic abilities of students; favor cognitive development, favor awareness of culture and language differences; facilitate the development of healthy affective-relational relationships among deaf and hearing children at school; develop linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge of LIS.

The theoretical base of program planning for "LISSIAMO" rests on the following methodological principles:

- 1) demonstrate how LIS can be used as a tool to stimulate communication and sharing;
- 2) offer children the opportunity to experiment with LIS in familiar and familial contexts;
- 3) favor and stimulate understanding of LIS, leaving children free to express spontaneously.

All classes are taught by Deaf LIS teachers: Gabriella Grioli- preschool; Tiziana Gulli, former Roberto Wirth scholar; Maria Baffigi - Primary school; Vincenzo Speranza, former Roberto Wirth scholar - Secondary school.



## Temple University intern Suzanne Zelnis's experience at CABSS

Suzanne Zelnis was our Temple University intern and did her internship with CABSS from September-December, 2012. She is an International Business major at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia with minors in Philosophy and Managing Human Capital.

"My internship with CABSS enabled me to experience the Italian culture and be immersed in a unique and powerful learning experience. I worked in the office at CABSS's where I carried out research for grants and funding, in addition to working directly with children who are deafblind. Sometimes, language differences could be seen as a barrier but at CABSS they emphasize how it is an opportunity for growth and communication. Similarly, money is sometimes seen as the most important determinant in wealth, while others view happiness the measurement of wealth. The loss of hearing or loss of sight is perceived as a disability by those who have hearing and sight, but many of the hearing or sighted are deaf and blind to the other wonders, richness and beauty in the world. Watching the progress the children made in a short span of three months was encouraging and inspirational. I truly hope that these children and all others who pass through CABSS's doors will learn the lesson CABSS seeks to teach them: to stand up for themselves, embrace all the opportunities offered, and fight for the respect each and every one of them deserves".



## New scholarship offered by the "Fulbright-Roberto Wirth Grant in Deafness at Gallaudet University"

The "Roberto Wirth" scholarship has made an important step in becoming a part of the Fulbright Program, the most widely recognized and prestigious international exchange program in the world.

The new "Fulbright- Roberto Wirth" scholarship is managed by the Fulbright Commission in collaboration with CABSS and is offered to young deaf and hearing Italian university graduates. The objective is to offer the winner the opportunity to specialize in an area of childhood deafness at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C, the only university in the world that is fully accessible to deaf individuals. Once "Fulbright-Roberto Wirth" scholars return to Italy they'll have the possibility, thanks to the knowledge they have gained at Gallaudet, to contribute to the lives of deaf and deafblind children in the areas of psychology and education.

The scholarship was founded in 1992 by Roberto Wirth who has been profoundly deaf since birth. Many young brilliant deaf individuals have had the opportunity to specialize in the United States and have become outstanding Italian professionals in the area of childhood deafness.

The application form for the 2014/ 2015 academic year will be available at [www.cabss.it](http://www.cabss.it) or [www.fulbright.it](http://www.fulbright.it) starting from September 2013. For more information please contact Dr Stefania Fadda at [info@cabss.it](mailto:info@cabss.it).



The U.S.-Italy Fulbright Commission  
*Linking Minds Across Cultures*



Centro Assistenza  
per Bambini Sordi  
e Sordociechi  
ONLUS



# Fundraising

## A magical Christmas with CABSS Onlus in favor of deaf and deafblind children

The annual Christmas event for the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus (CABSS) was held in the beautiful ambiance of the Hotel Hassler on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 2012.

The sparkling and warm color of gold illuminated the backdrop of the festive event presented by Milly Carlucci, who with her elegance and kindness, welcomed distinguished guests, consolidated donors at the foot of the majestic Christmas tree of the Hotel Hassler, a tree that truly makes the atmosphere at Christmas time at the Hassler simply magical.

200 guests made their way to Salone Medici where they were served a spectacular gala dinner, a rich menu created by noted chef Francesco Aprea of the one star Michelin, Imago restaurant. During the evening, CABSS raised money for its early intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children.

More than 35 wineries donated bottles of wine that were carefully selected by sensory analyst, Luca Maroni and auctioned off by noted auctioneer, Luciano Carnaroli.

Guest of honor, Isabella Rauti encouraged all guests to make a donation in favor of deaf and deafblind children who regularly attend the programs at CABSS. In the multisensory laboratory, "The First Step...", early intervention programs are individualized and respond to the specialized needs of each child. Children have the opportunity to learn and develop skills and concepts through exposure to various stimuli.

The President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano awarded CABSS a medal of representation. Recognition that brings much joy to the hearts of all the staff who dedicate their expertise, time and love to all deaf and deafblind children who attend programs at CABSS.



### Charity Burraco Tournament for the children at CABSS

The Association of Piazza di Spagna and Trinita Dei Monti, presided by Roberto Wirth, and the Association of Via Condotti, presided by Gianni Battistoni, two important and prestigious Roman historical associations, joined together to organize a charitable tournament of Burraco dedicated to the children at CABSS.

The tournament was held on December 5<sup>th</sup> at the Hotel Hassler and involved over 100 participants who played at the gaming tables to support CABSS and used it as an opportunity to exchange Christmas greetings. The winning couple received two stunning Bulgari watches.



During the evening, a lottery was also organized. The first prize was a Mercedes Benz bicycle. All funds raised by the lottery were donated to CABSS, making it possible to continue their preschool early intervention programs for deaf and deafblind children.

### Support us!

Donate online at our website: [www.cabss.it](http://www.cabss.it)

Bank transfer made out to  
Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e  
Sordociechi Onlus, Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6  
– 00187 Roma.

Gruppo Banco Popolare  
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Please indicate your name, address and telephone number on the transfer, so that we can send you a receipt.

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### PLEASE NOTE

Your donation is tax deductible!

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