

THE FIRST STEP...



Dear Readers,

I am happy to present this edition of our newsletter, a useful communication tool for keeping you updated on the activities of the association I preside over.

During 2023, CABSS participated in various national and international scientific events, including the XXI National Congress of the Italian Society of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapy (SITCC). In this edition we included an article on "Cognitive - behavioral therapy accessible to deafblind children" from the prestigious scientific journal Franco Angeli "Quaderni di Psicoterapia Cognitiva". The article focuses on the experience of a group of 20 Italian deafblind children supported by CABSS during the 2020 health emergency.

Last fall we carried out "Creative Collaboration", a project created by Dr. Stefanie Anarumo, educator and research expert in inclusive and accessible art. It was an international and intercultural exchange of inclusive theater. Children from Rome, Italy, and Boston, in the United States, participated in the project.

Finally, three wonderful events were held in favor of CABSS; a golf tournament, a day organized by our friend Anna Folchi and our splendid Christmas event: the musical Matilda at the Sistina theater!

Before leaving you to browse the newsletter, I would like to let you know that it is possible to support the Center through different methods of donation: from bank transfer to online donation, from check to cash. You will find all the information on the last page. Thanking you in advance on behalf of all the children and families who attend the programs at CABSS for your support!

kindest Regards!



In this edition:

- CABSS and sensorimotor therapy at the 2023 XXI SITCC National Congress..... p. 2
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and deafblind children.....p. 3
- Creative Collaboration: an international inclusive theater projectp. 4 - 5
- The legendary Matilda: the protagonist of our Christmas festivitiesp. 6
- The "Give a Smile" charity eventp. 7
- The Hassler Roma golf tournament dedicated to CABSS.....p.7
- Support us.....p.8
- Support CABSS directly from U.S.A.....p. 8
- Dai valore al 5X1000.....p. 8
- "Il Silenzio è Stato il Mio Primo Compagno di Giochi"p. 8

CABSS and sensorimotor therapy at the 2023 XXI SITCC National Congress

In 2023, CABSS participated in various scientific events, both nationally and internationally, with one of the highlights being the 21st National Congress of the Italian Society of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapy (SITCC) held in Bari from September 21st to 24th at the prestigious Libera Università Mediterranea "Giuseppe Degennaro". The SITCC congress has always provided an opportunity for in - depth exploration and discussion of new scientific evidence and future perspectives in Cognitive Psychotherapy. The theme of the latest edition, "Cognitive therapy between research, clinical practice, rehabilitation, and social engagement", aimed to place the efforts of in - depth analysis and scientific comparison within a broader reflection on contemporary challenges, such as global crises impacting the mental health of adults and children. This includes such issues as the recent health emergency, widespread global conflicts, and the rising economic and social inequalities which includes alarming data on poverty affecting 9.7% of the Italian population (Caritas, 2023).

The Director of CABSS, Dr. Stefania Fadda, presented on "The Role of the Body in Trauma Treatment" (S. Fadda, 2023), proposing an alternative approach to traditional "talk therapy" for treating post - traumatic stress disorders: sensorimotor psychotherapy. Developed by Pat Ogden in the 80s, sensorimotor psychotherapy utilizes observation and intervention tools primarily directed at the body. The body is regarded as a comprehensive source of information guiding the process of processing traumatic experiences and resolving somatic, emotional and cognitive symptoms affecting patients. Focusing on posture, muscle tensions and movements, therapists assist patients in interpreting and paying attention to their body language, recognizing how physical sensations are linked to specific emotions and thoughts. Through an increasing mind - body integration, patients gain progressive emotional regulation and a heightened sense of self - mastery, reaching an optimal state of functioning and well - being.



An image of the CABSS' laboratory

stimulation or understimulation, either with assistance from others or through self - regulation. This helps them stay in the "window of tolerance", where internal and external stimuli are manageable. Once stabilized, children are in an optimal condition to learn, develop or reinforce integrated use of senses, proprioceptive and vestibular abilities, motor skills, memory use, emotional and socio - relational competencies, as well as cognitive and communicative skills.

Sensorimotor psychotherapy can also be used with children, especially when facing various challenges related to physical, emotional, cognitive and communicative development. It proves beneficial from an early age when experiences are less verbal and more concrete. The application involves active and physical interventions using appropriate tools, materials and games, emphasizing the importance of a secure environment for therapy with children. For deaf and deafblind children supported by CABSS, sensorimotor psychotherapy principles, combined with multisensory therapy, early intervention and cognitive - behavioral therapy, are applied to early intervention programs carried out within its multisensory laboratory. This safe and adaptable environment takes into account the child's specialized needs is equipped with multisensory tools and games, some of which are technological and/or interactive. Through the sensorimotor approach utilized in the CABSS multisensory lab, children learn to stabilize themselves amidst over-



An image of the CABSS' laboratory



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and deafblind children

Among the principles on which the CABSS early intervention model is based are those of cognitive - behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is the most used approach in the treatment of anxiety disorders, recommended by the World Health Organization also for children and adolescents with emotional disorders (WHO, 2012). There is no information on the implementation of CBT with individuals who are deafblind nor are there any references to research conducted on the topic (Laurito, 2021), with the exception of a study carried out in 2018. This study involved four young adults, between the ages of 18 and 22, with CHARGE Syndrome (Bruce et al., 2018), a rare genetic disease, considered as one of the main causes of deafblindness.

The staff at CABSS wanted to make a contribution to the subject and wrote an article that was then published in the Franco Angeli "Quaderni di Psicoterapia Cognitiva" (n° 53 of 28 December 2023, pp. 43 - 58), a prestigious scientific journal on Cognitive Psychotherapy.

The journal is available online on www.journals.francoangeli.it. The article, entitled "Cognitive-behavioral Therapy accessible to Deafblind Children" (S. Fadda, G. Caravello, M. Cidronelli, L. Harripersad, 2023), reports the experience of a group of 20 Italian deafblind children supported by CABSS during the COVID - 19 health emergency of 2020, specifically during the period of total lockdown and the immediate post - lockdown. As soon as the lockdown began following the Prime Ministerial Decree on the 9th of March 2020, the first concern that the staff at CABSS had was that children would not have the possibility of establishing contact with

their environment and with others making them more vulnerable and hinder their development. In fact, connecting with others and physical contact are important for maintaining mental health, since even in normal conditions they are at risk of social isolation (Wittich and Simcock, 2019).

Faced with such a situation, CABSS hypothesized that the disruption of daily routines, the difficulty in accessing information and the world suddenly becoming incomprehensible could have caused threatening thoughts in deafblind children with consequent anxiety. The team also hypothesized that the interruption of early intervention programs at CABSS, school closures, the interruption of social relationships with peers and the lack of interaction with the external environment and the community could have caused thoughts of loss resulting in sadness.

Subsequently, on the basis of what was hypothesized, a remote online intervention method was developed which actively involved the children's parents and incorporated the application of cognitive - behavioral strategies, in combination with the principles of early intervention for childhood deafblindness. The CBT strategies were adapted to each child taking into account the characteristics of the home environment, sensory needs, the construction of a new routine and the most effective communication methods for accessing information. As a result, deafblind children were able to manage their anxiety and sadness experienced during the lockdown. In the case of

anxiety they were able to reduce the incidences of self - directed or hetero-directed problem behaviors and reactions such as vomiting, abdominal or limb pain and agitation. Their attention span increased as the anxiety subsided. In the case of sadness, the manifestation of aggression, discouragement and reluctance towards activities previously considered pleasant, tendency to sleep more or sleep less, tendency to eat more or eat less and withdrawal into oneself were also reduced.

References:

Bruce S.M., Bashinski S.M., Covelli A.J., Bernstein V., Zatta M.C. and Briggs S. (2018). Positive Behavior Supports for Individuals Who Are Deafblind with CHARGE Syndrome. In: *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 112: 497-508. DOI: 10.1177/0145482x1811200507.

Laurito C. (2021). Rational emotive behavior therapy for deafblind individuals with progressive vision loss. New York, N.Y.: St. John's University, St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology.

WHO (2012). Psychosocial interventions, treatment of emotional disorders. Testo disponibile nel sito: <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/treatment-care/mental-health-gap-action-programme/evidence-centre/child-and-adolescent-mental-disorders/psychosocial-interventions-treatment-of-emotional-disorders>, 6 marzo 2023.

Wittich W., Simcock P. (2019). Aging and Combined Vision and Hearing Loss. In: Ravenscroft J., editor, *The Routledge Handbook of Visual Impairment*. London: Routledge



The cover of the Cognitive Psychotherapy journal

ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Creative Collaboration: an international inclusive theater project

CABSS had the pleasure of hosting “Creative Collaboration”, an international and intercultural project of inclusive theatre created by Dr. Stefanie Anarumo and her colleague Dr. Alexa Beil. Ms. Anarumo, Artist, Educator and Research Expert in Inclusive and Accessible Art, arrived in the capital directly from New York to carry out the project through a creative, artistic and cultural collaboration between the integrated bilingual school (Italian and Italian Sign Language) “Tommaso Silvestri” at the Istituto di Istruzione Specializzata per Sordi “A. Magarotto” (ISISS), of Rome, and the inclusive school “Ellis Mendell” of Boston (U.S.A). We asked Dr. Anarumo to talk about this truly unique experience, which took place from the 2nd to 20th of October, 2023.

- Hi Stefanie, can you describe your project, “Creative Collaboration”, to our readers?

“Creative Collaboration: Artistically Inclusive Classrooms Across Cultures” engaged 80 students ages 8 - 12 in the imaginative processes of writing, designing, performing and producing live theater. Deaf and hearing students from Istituto Statale di Istruzione Specializzata per Sordi (ISISS) in Rome, Italy, virtually collaborated with students from Ellis Mendell Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts, on visual and performing arts education pedagogy and practice. Over the course of three - weeks, the two elementary schools joined forces to create an original theatrical performance shared on a local and global stage. The project was an innovative opportunity for elementary students to cultivate global relationships, cross-cultural collaboration and positive self - expression. This project was a recipient of the “Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund Grant” which is made available to US Exchange Alumni, through the US State Department and Global Ties. The team leaders and educators for this project,

Stefanie Anarumo and Alexa Beil, are alumni of The Harvard Graduate School of Education and are U.S. Fulbright Grant Recipients.



Doctor Stefanie Anarumo

- How did the idea come about?

In 2015, I was fortunate enough to be awarded a Fulbright Research Grant in Deafness, where I traveled to Rome, Italy, and created an inclusive theater curriculum that was hosted by CABSS. My Fulbright project was entitled “The theater for deaf children: an artistic fusion of languages signed and spoken” and served as the creation for a chil-

dren’s theater in - school program which utilized four languages: Italian Sign Language, Italian, American Sign Language and English. In applying for the Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund grant in 2023, it was my desire to expand upon the work conducted as part of my previous Fulbright grant and develop international relationships between elementary students in Rome with that of elementary students in the United States. I believe the best way to bring students together is via visual and performing arts, since the arts have the power to transcend any barrier and forge mutual understanding.

- How did the collaboration between the two schools take place?

I served as the Team Lead and Theater Instructor for Rome, Italy, where the students focused on the performance aspects of the show (acting, singing, dancing, etc) and Alexa, a Visual Arts teacher served as the Team Lead and Visual Arts Instructor for Boston, Massachusetts, where the students focused on the technical aspects of the show (props, set back-drop, etc).



A scene from the show



Both classrooms brainstormed character ideas and story ideas which then were woven together to create their original script. Team Rome's classes were conducted primarily in Italian and Italian Sign Language, as well as English and American Sign Language. In the first phase of the project, we began the brainstorming and script building. We introduced the components of a story (exposition, rising action, conflict, falling action, resolution) and gave the students some prompts to brainstorm their own ideas for stories in small groups. At the end of each day, Alexa and I shared our class pictures, videos, student art work, design ideas and feedback so we could be prepared to share it with our students the next day. After each small group (both in the USA and in Italy) had the opportunity to share their script ideas, a larger story was woven together which combined multiple characters, themes, and settings proposed by the young artists. Additionally, cross cultural collaborative sessions took place where both elementary schools sent video greetings and wrote letters to each other. Once the script was decided upon, team Boston began designing and building backdrops and large props, and team Rome began

musical elements of the show began to come together.

friends and the "Ravioli King" invites



A scene from the show

Team Boston designed large handheld props, which I then replicated and gave to team Rome so my students were able to rehearse and work with the props their American peers designed during the actual performance. Pictures were taken and sent back to team Boston so the young artists could see their amazing work in action. The large props that were designed included: a giant chocolate chip cookie, a pizza rocket ship, a giant ice cream cone and some candy gumdrops and lollipops.

everyone to his festival and they all live happily ever after.

The final performance took place on Friday, October 20th, 2023 both in Boston and in Rome. My colleague and I both felt it was very important to not only highlight the incredible work our students created in their own home country, but to also celebrate and emphasize the work created by their international partners. Both classrooms were decorated with pictures of the international creative process, as well as, with the pen pal letters the students wrote to each other. This project is rooted in creative collaboration, mutual understanding and global citizenship. I am very proud of the incredible work our students created together while geographically apart.

- Can you tell us something about the final show put on by the children?

The title of the show was called "The Case of the Missing Sweets" and was created by the students. The premise included the following: there is a

group of aliens traveling the galaxy stealing each planet's ice cream, sweets, chocolate chip cookies and sushi. The aliens stole from "Ravioli Royal Family" and from a magical forest of talking animals, and are being pursued by a group of adventurers who fly in a spaceship made of pizza. The play concludes with a dance battle where the aliens return all of the candy and sweets and all of the characters decide to become

- Can you say something about your experience in Rome?

I had the most amazing time in Rome and was thrilled to return to CABSS. I am grateful to the CABSS staff, the faculty and staff at the Istituto Istituto Statale di Istruzione Specializzata per Sordi, the U.S. Embassy in Rome, the U.S. State Department and the Global Ties Program for their assistance and support of these artistic and educational endeavors. I hope to have the opportunity to return again in the near future. It is my desire to build upon this work and continue its development internationally.



A scene from the show

casting, staging, rehearsing scenes and learning lines. Daily classes consisted of drafting set and costume design renderings, building props, blocking and staging scenes, understanding the basics of drama, stage directions and acting techniques. Classes during the third and final week of the program shifted into a "Tech Week" approach. Finalized materials were shared virtually with one another and the technical and

FUNDRAISING

The legendary Matilda: the protagonist of our Christmas festivities

December 17th was a very special Sunday for us because it was the day we held our annual Christmas event and gave our supporters the opportunity to attend the musical Matilda!

Matilda, one of the most loved children's books for over three generations, was transformed into a beautiful musical, for the first time in Italy by Massimo Romeo Piparo and performed at the Sistina Theater.

Matilda is not ordinary child and was born against the will of her detestable parents. She is an incredibly intelligent, sharp, curious and determined little girl. Nothing discourages her, nor her parents' attempts to belittle her, nor the school where she is sent to, which seems more like a maximum security prison than a school. The principal of the school is the feared Miss Trunchbull who enjoys harassing and humiliating the children in every way possible. However, Matilda does not lose heart and is determined to make a change in her life and that of her peers, armed with irreverence, love of knowledge, courage and self-confidence she makes her mark in the world.

With Luca Ward in the role of the fearsome Principal Trunchbull and with the much-loved couple from The Pozzoli's Family, Alice Mangione and Gianmarco Pozzoli, as Matilda's cynical and clumsy parents, the musical was the perfect show for the whole family. Based on the famous children's novel by Roald Dahl, the musical made use of the entertaining text by Dennis Kelly and the magnificent music and lyrics by Tim Minchin, adapted entirely into Italian by Piparo himself.

The incredible scenography and moments of intense emotion made for a magical evening out for both the young and old. The many children who attended the musical filled the theater with uncontrollable laughter as they enjoyed hilarious scenes and dance performances. For older audience members, some could relate to the role models in Matilda's life.



Veruschka Wirth with Beppe Convertini and LIS interpreter Marcello Cardarelli (photo by Luca Rossi)



Gianmarco Pozzoli on stage with LIS interpreter Marcello Cardarelli (photo by Luca Rossi)

Before the show, some of the supporters of CABSS Onlus and ANLAIDS Lazio Onlus were hosted at Hassler Roma to have a Christmas Cocktail. Under the incredible Christmas tree, our guests exchanged wishes for the season and were able to toast to the New Year. After the cocktail, guests made their way from Hassler Roma to the Sistina Theater, taking in the magic of Via Sistina that was adorned with Christmas lights. Once they arrived at the theater the guests were welcomed by Beppe Convertini who did the introductions for the evening, giving the opportunity to our President, Veruschka Wirth, and the President of ANLAIDS Lazio, Gianluca de Marchi, to present their associations and speak about the work they carried out over the past year.

We would like to thank our supporters for always being present at our events and being a part of our big and beautiful family!

A heartfelt thank you also goes out to the sponsors without whom the evening would not have been possible:

Gold Sponsor: Lexacta Global Legal Advice; San Paolo Invest - Private Banker; Studio Legale Consolo; Working Innovation Network

Bronze Sponsor: Lamuc 89, l'informatica al vostro servizio



The president of CABSS Onlus Veruschka Wirth and the president of ANLAIDS Lazio Onlus Gianluca De Marchi (photo by Luca Rossi)



The “Give a Smile” charity event

The charity event dedicated to CABSS, "Give a Smile", took place on December 16th, 2023, within the splendid halls of the Hotel de la Ville in Monza. The seminar entitled, “Nothing is impossible. The life of Roberto E. Wirth”, was organized by our dear friend Anna Folchi.

After the great success of the event in Rome, Anna decided to also give her deaf friends from northern Italy the opportunity to get to know Roberto Wirth in depth sharing the various aspects of his life such as his work as a great entrepreneur, his heart of gold, his significant role as father and friend. Before the event, lunch took place in one of the historic hotels of Monza, the de la Ville: a building with great personality overlooking the Villa Reale, a beautiful residence with a magnificent award - winning restaurant by Chef Fabio Silva, the Derby Grill.

The guests were welcomed in an evocative Christmas setting, a stone's throw away from the Royal Palace of Monza which, with the Royal Villa, the gardens and the park, represents a complex of inestimable landscape, historical, monu-

mental and architectural value. Monza is known for its artistic excellence, sporting events and surprising greenery, boasting a splendid position, in the center of one of the most productive areas of Europe.

Our director, Dr. Stefania Fadda, spoke to the numerous people who attended the event about the history and activities carried out at CABSS, the much loved association of Roberto Wirth who founded it in 2004 and was President until his sudden passing in June 2022.

We sincerely thank Anna Folchi for her friendship and her dedication. We also would like to thank all the deaf individuals who participated in person at the event and who virtually enveloped us in a warm embrace that was felt all the way from Rome.



A collage of photos with Anna Folchi and Stefania Fadda during the event “Give a Smile”

The Hassler Roma golf tournament dedicated to CABSS

On a hot, sunny Sunday in September, the Hassler Roma tournament dedicated to CABSS Onlus took place at the Parco di Roma Golf Club. Dr. Giusy Caravello and Dr. Marta Cidronelli attended the event and shared information with golfers about the programs carried out at the

multisensory laboratory at CABSS.

Lush green rolling fields and sunshine welcomed the many players who challenged each other in a healthy competition of golf. The course, consisted of eighteen holes - par 72, extending internally in a setting that was rich in archaeological and environmental wonders and immersed in the tranquility of Veio Park. As the players, both professional and beginners, moved from one hole to another they could see the St. Peter's dome in the horizon which created such an unforgettable backdrop.

At the end of the competition, Dr. Roberto Wirth, Executive President of Hassler Roma and Vice President of CABSS Onlus, gave a short thank you speech and awarded beautifully handcrafted silver creations to the winners of the tournament: 1 - 2 - 3 net per category, 1 lordo, 1 lady and 1 senior.

We would like to thank the President of the Parco di Roma Golf Club, Dr. Massimo Gasbarra, for hosting CABSS and for allowing us to spend such a relaxing Sunday with friends.



Roberto Wirth during the awards ceremony at the Hassler Rome tournament

FUNDRAISING

Support us!

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

Banca CREDEM

IBAN: IT91 J 03032 03201 010000004258

BIC/SWIFT: BACRIT21318

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.

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 support CABSS by making a tax - deductible donation through the **Myriad U.S.A. Charity** (former King Baudouin Foundation United States - KBFUS) in one of the following ways:

Online donation: on the <https://www.every.org/myriadusa> website search for the "Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children" in the "search by name or location" bar. This will take you to the page dedicated to CABSS from which you can make an online donation (Paypal, credit card, Google Pay, etc.).

Check: Write your check out to

Myriad U.S.A. and send it to Myriad U.S.A., 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2400, New York, NY 10176. **Important:** in the "Memo Section" of the check please write "Assistance Center for Deaf and Deafblind Children".

Wire transfer: write to info@myriadusa.org or contact them by telephone (212) 713 7660.

For more information:

www.myriadusa.org



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

Bi - annual Newsletter of the Centro Assistenza per Bambini Sordi e Sordociechi Onlus
N° 32/2023

Via Nomentana 56 - 00161 Roma

Tel. 06 89561038 / Fax 06 89561040 / Mob. 331 8520534

www.cabss.org

E-mail: info@cabss.it

Tax Number: 97350450587

Director: Ilaria Banni

Editor: Stefania Fadda

Writers: Giusy Caravello, Marta Cidronelli, Laura Harripersad

Registration - Tribunale di Roma: N° 499 del 07/11/2007

Printed on december 31st, 2023

Printed by Tipografia Silvestro Chiricozzi S.r.l.

