



## **CONI USA - Italian American Families, Friends and Sport Together**

(November 06, 2015)



More and more scientific studies and research confirm the fundamental importance of physical movement and organized extracurricular sport activities for children since their earliest years of life to help them develop and improve cognitive skills and greater concentration capacity that greatly helps them in the classroom. A symposium to address these issues, titled "The Fundamental Importance of Free Movement and Organized Extracurricular Sport Activity for the Cognitive Development of the Child: The View From the Field," will be presented by Coni, the Italian National Olympic Committee USA and the Italian Cultural Institute in Chicago

The symposium is held under the Auspices of the Italian Consulate General Chicago and is co-sponsored by Casa Italia Chicago, with support by the Association of Illinois Montessori Schools, the I'AM FFaST-Italian American Families, Friends and Sport Together, and other entities.

One speaker is Prof. Linda Pagani, a psychologist teaching at the University of Montreal (CA) and its affiliated CHU Saint-Justine children's hospital who lead a group that recently produced a study on



the symposium theme.

"We worked with information provided by parents and teachers to compare kindergarteners' activities with their classroom engagement as they grew up," Pagani said. "By time they reached the fourth grade, kids who played structured sports were identifiably better at following instructions and remaining focused in the classroom. There is something specific to the sporting environment - perhaps the unique sense of belonging to a team to a special group with a common goal - that appears to help kids understand the importance of respecting the rules and honoring responsibilities."

Another speaker is Prof. Lynda Lewis-Brandt, who has been teaching at the Near North Montessori School in Chicago for the past 25 years.

"At Near North Montessori, a school for students aged infant through 14, we operate in accordance with Maria Montessori's emphasis on the development of the whole child," said Lewis-Brandt. "Our facility provides space for multiple physical activities. In addition to the movement integrated into classroom use of Montessori learning materials, on any day students may be doing yoga, dance, developmental gym, swimming, or sports games during the school day, followed by a selection of after-school activities including team sports. Thus we are able to attend to the physical health and well-being of the students, and set them on a path of healthy choices going forward."

Mr. Mico Delianova Licastro, US representative of Coni and organizer of the symposium, said: "Coni is keenly aware of the need for children to start at a very early age to engage in an active life style and to participate in organized sports in and out of school when of the proper age. Coni is present in several countries with large populations of citizens of Italian descent, like here in the USA, to organize for the children of our communities all-in sports competitions, ludic events and to promote a healthy diet."

The symposium host and founder of the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame George Randazzo said: "I'm very please to host this symposium. We at the NIASHF are firm believers of having children be active and to practice sports. We have several programs to this end, especially to help children who cannot afford to practice the sport they love."

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Speakers and organizers are available for interviews by phone or in person on the day of the event.

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**"The Fundamental Importance of Free Movement and Organized Extracurricular Sport Activity for the Cognitive Development of the Child: The View From the Field,"**  
**Wednesday, November 11, at 6 pm, at the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame, 1431 West Taylor Street, in Chicago's Little Italy**

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