

Vitamin L News

Fall 2018

What does the L stand for?

This question has popped up many times over the years, and yes, it stands for love. The thinking behind the name is that all people need vitamins to thrive and survive, and we all need love to thrive and survive.

There are numerous studies and articles about this topic. There are studies that show that babies who were not held enough and did not receive enough attention experienced "failure to thrive," even when they were given enough food. In a piece titled: "Why Children Need Love to Grow," David R. Hamilton, PhD wrote

*"If an infant is born into an environment lacking in love, emotional warmth, and responsiveness, the growth of its brain is hugely affected. But if an environment changes, the brain changes too. Research for the Bucharest Early Intervention Project (BEIP) has tracked the growth and development of children adopted internationally or fostered from Romanian Orphanages and indeed shown that if a child in such an institution is adopted or fostered within its first 2 years of life, growth and development return to normal. In fact, one of the most encouraging pieces of research related to the project contains, in the title, '... Evidence for Massive Catch-up Following International Adoption.'**

If the child is left too much longer, hope is not lost but it does take a more skilled set of adoptive or foster parents to help the child emotionally adjust to life....Such is the stunting of growth, in fact, when a child is deprived of love that UNICEF even used a statistic from the BEIP, that "For every 3 months a child spends in an institution, it loses a full month of growth."

And at risk of sounding soft or idealistic, I think we each have to individually try to spread more love in the world. It sounds a bit corny, we've all heard it before, but why not? We're living in a socially connected world. Ideas and behaviors ripple out like stones dropped in water. Each of us can make a difference. Lots of small acts can shift mountains!"

All of the efforts we have made with Vitamin L for almost 30 years and all of the efforts we continue to make boil down to one goal – TO SPREAD AS MUCH LOVE AND GOODWILL AS POSSIBLE TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

*<http://drdavidhamilton.com/why-children-need-love-to-grow>



**Please support Vitamin L's
outreach, service, and leadership work**
with a tax-deductible donation online at
<https://www.vitaminL.org> or to:
The Vitamin L Project, 105 King St., Ithaca, NY 14850
THANK YOU!

From Alumna Erin Rieger



Like many, my journey with Vitamin L began as an audience member. I vividly recall the elementary school cafeteria filled with energy, smiles and singing from the chorus members and the audience of students and teachers alike. My mother remembers me coming home after the concert, at only age 5, already counting down the years to my opportunity to audition. When I joined the chorus in the 6th grade, it was this engagement between audience and performers that remained my favorite aspect of Vitamin L. The universal messages of the songs, expressive faces, and fun dance moves guaranteed that high-fives awaited us from the students streaming out of the auditorium at the end of each performance.

Another unique aspect of Vitamin L was how each performance and rehearsal had a mix of chorus members we knew well and those who we were just getting to meet. I always appreciated the friendliness and willingness to mentor among chorus members from different schools and ages. My experiences as a Vitamin L youth advisory board member and summer training session leader conveyed the same values. I enjoyed learning about the functioning of a nonprofit organization and helping to organize projects with my peers. The message was clear: people of all ages and backgrounds bring valuable talents and ideas.

These perspectives from Vitamin L had a clear role in my college experience and decisions about my career path. I studied chemistry and sociology at Rice University and developed an interest in health disparities, assisting on research surrounding social services for refugees and asylum seekers in Texas, and on smoking cessation interventions designed for people living with HIV/AIDS. Following college, I worked on research investigating migrant health disparities in Norway and, this semester, began my first year of medical school at the University of Chicago. As a future healthcare provider, I hope to use the valuable lessons Vitamin L taught me about inclusivity and collaboration to engage patients and their families in care decisions, and to work with other healthcare providers and community members. More broadly, these values and communication skills can enrich work in any field and can be applied in our day-to-day interactions with family, friends, and new acquaintances.

Janice and Jan Nigro, in their dedication to empowering audience members and chorus members alike, taught me the greatest lesson: meaningful change is incremental and requires perseverance, teamwork, and a sense of mission. Their art and teaching convey great optimism. I am grateful that Vitamin L played such a significant role in my adolescent years and plan to take these lessons into my continued studies and career.

- Erin Rieger, 1st year medical student, University of Chicago (See Erin in the photo on the next page in a striped shirt)

Honoring Dorothy Cotton January 5, 1930 – June 10, 2018

Civil rights leader and friend of Vitamin L Dorothy Cotton passed on in June. She gave a lifetime of service to humanity, continually working for civil rights and human rights for all. Despite the hardships she endured and the profound world problems she was working to change, she was quick to laugh and a lot of fun to be with. She had great determination and a true zest for life that was inspiring.

Dorothy shared her dynamic spirit and energy with Vitamin L on several occasions. In 2010 she was presented with the National Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, TN. Vitamin L sang for her and the community at a local event celebrating this honor.

In 2012 Dorothy joined Vitamin L in the recording studio to add her soulful voice to Vitamin L's version of "This Little Light of Mine" for the "Sing for Dr. King! Vitamin L Songs for a Beloved Community" recording. In 2013 she was a special guest at Vitamin L's 1000th concert celebration. That day the large audience experienced "living history" when Dorothy spoke on "The Importance of Music in Building Community" and sang a rousing solo on the last song.

Many of our chorus members were deeply touched by the opportunity to meet Dorothy and sing with her. She kindly agreed to meet with a group of Vitamin L members to discuss non-violence and how it works. She spoke to them about how important it is to look within ourselves and see the potential for each of us as individuals to affect change.

Two years ago, Dorothy sang with Vitamin L and community members for the "Walk a Mile" video, which can be viewed on YouTube. It was great having her. We are very grateful to have known Dorothy and we appreciate her dedicated life and all the encouragement she gave to our chorus members and our project.

To learn more about Dorothy's life of service, read her important book: [If Your Back's Not Bent: The Role of the Citizenship Education Program in the Civil Rights Movement](#). You also can learn more about Dorothy's life and the ongoing work being carried on in her memory at www.dorothycottoninstitute.org.



Center for Transformative Action

The Vitamin L Project

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Inspiring children since 1989!

*Dear Vitamin L,
I don't think you know
how many people you inspire.
It was so fun watching all of you
dance and sing. Even I sang a little.
I looked around the crowd and
saw everyone smiling!
Sincerely,
Julia*

For concert schedule and more info: www.vitaminL.org

The Vitamin L Project is a Project of The Center for Transformative Action

