

We Keep Going / Corona 2020

We hope this newsletter finds you as well as possible in this tumultuous time. We hold all of you in our hearts and wish the best for you. In mid-March we had to cancel our scheduled concerts and rehearsals, so now we are focusing on producing more music videos to get Vitamin L's positive, uplifting messages out to people. We have found creative ways we can do this safely.

Our advisory board has continued to meet – now online. At our May meeting, board member Patricia Haines asked if Vitamin L songwriter Jan Nigro would write a new song about the times we are living in with the pandemic. He wrote a wonderful song and in July we worked with videographer Jeff Hodges, sound engineer Doug Robinson, 5 Vitamin L alums and 10 current members to create a music video of the song, titled “We Keep Going / Corona 2020.” We were very grateful to have the chance to work on this project. It was so good to see our singers in person, from a distance.

“We Keep Going / Corona 2020” is a tribute to the perseverance of the human spirit and an appreciation for all the ways essential workers and people everywhere are helping each other in these challenging times.

Every day there are profound examples of love in action, of the inner light in people shining bright. Vitamin L offers this song and video with love to you and to everyone – health care workers, farmers and food workers, sanitation workers, educators, 1st responders, moms, dads, kids, elders – everyone. May it give you a dose of hope and inspiration.

To view the video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/vitaminlproject> and you will find the video there.

We are currently finishing a music video of the song “Some Rights in This World,” which will include 17 singers. It will be on our Youtube channel as well once we finish it. We will make as many music videos as funding permits, because live concerts in elementary schools are not viable at this time.

Our Youtube channel also has scrolling lyric videos of Vitamin L songs, which are a wonderful free resource. Parents at home with their elementary age children may enjoy sharing the scrolling lyric videos with their children and using them as a starting point for discussions, reading practice, and art projects on the themes.

- Janice Nigro, Director, Vitamin L



A DOSE OF INSPIRATION CAN HELP US THROUGH THE DAY

The Vitamin L song "Who Inspires You?" by Jan Nigro highlights everyday people behaving in ways that add to the love and goodness in this world and it asks us to think about who inspires us.

In 1976 my brother Doug told me about a college classmate. The thing that stood out about this person was that Doug had never heard him put down anyone. This struck me deeply 44 years ago and I remember thinking that I wanted to be like him. Many years later I asked Jan to include a verse inspired by him in "Who Inspires You?"

In 7th and 8th grades I had two memorable science teachers. Both were very invested in their work. One of them was so passionate about Earth Science that it was contagious. The other was vibrant and engaging and one day she threw a rubber chicken toward us to be sure we were paying attention. I still remember that fun moment 53 years later. I asked Jan to include homage to those science teachers in the song, too.

I've been inspired many times over the years working with our chorus members and watching them grow and blossom and overcome fear.

In 2013 7th grader Mae Simon wrote: *As soon as I joined Vitamin L, I loved it. As I walked through the doors for my first rehearsal, I knew that it was going to be great. A chance to show the world what I was made of, and perform! I could finally get over my stupid stage fright, and start singing openly. Now, being in Vitamin L for a while, I see myself as a much better person.*

I am better with my friends, and I am getting much more positive feedback. I

am more polite, and less shy, which is a big thing, because I used to be incredibly timid and couldn't speak up for myself.

So, all in all, Vitamin L has been a positive experience, and I can't wait for the years to come.

Mae started out shy and timid when she joined Vitamin L and I watched her grow tremendously in self-confidence and poise over time. In her senior year of high school I watched in awe as she played the very big, bold role of Maureen in a production of "Rent." Her transformation was inspiring!

Vitamin L alumna Nathalie Louge has been working for several years all over Sub-Saharan Africa on literacy programs.

She wrote: Vitamin L songs all have important messages but what I like most about "Who Inspires You?" is how grateful it makes me feel for the many inspiring people in my life and in the world. They have and continue to inspire me to be myself, to appreciate what I have, and to positively contribute to the world.

Like Nathalie, I also am grateful for inspiring people in my life. In preparing this article, I had the chance to talk to one of my heroes on the phone!

In 2019 I read about a Pakistani immigrant, Kazi Mannan, who owns a restaurant three blocks from the White House. The special thing about this restaurant is that for years it has fed both White House staff and homeless people with love and dignity. The policy was: If you're poor or homeless, you eat for free. He served 16,000 free meals in 2018. He funded this himself.

What makes this extra powerful is that

he grew up in poverty in a small village in Pakistan that had no electricity or running water. I read that he arrived in America with \$3.00 in his pocket in the late 90's, and with hard work, around 2014 he was able to become the owner of Sakina Halal Grill, which he named in memory of his mother Sakina.

In an article about Kazi by Eliza Theiss on Goalcast.com, I read, *From the first day he took over the restaurant, Kazi has welcomed all those struggling in life to eat, free of charge, in his restaurant. Anybody can walk in and request a sit-down or take-out meal at Sakina, no questions asked.* Homeless restaurant guests are seated next to paying customers, and they are treated with dignity.

When I was writing this article, I wondered how Kazi and the restaurant have been faring in the pandemic. He has done so much for humanity for years. In addition to feeding people, he also has gone into the streets with coats, gloves and other items to help homeless people stay warm in the winter.

So I called the restaurant and Kazi answered. I was so glad to speak to him and express my admiration and appreciation for all he has done for people. I found out that the restaurant had to shut down for 3 months due to the pandemic and they are challenged right now. The rent is very high in their location, and his service activities had been all self-funded. I am hoping for the best for this kind and generous person and his loving work. He truly inspires me!

Enjoy the lyrics of the song. Maybe they will remind you of someone. Maybe of yourself. Who inspires you?

- Janice Nigro, Director, Vitamin L

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!

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

by Jan Nigro © 1994 Janimation Music

CHORUS:

Tell me who, who inspires you?
You gotta tell me who, who inspires you?
And tell me what they do to inspire, lift you higher,
Who inspires you?

There's a kid at school,
Never seen her put down anyone.
I really think that's cool, trying to be like that myself.

There's the guy who lives next door,
He works all day in the grocery store,
And still finds the time if someone needs his help.

There's my Uncle Tim,
When he says he'll do it, it gets done.
We can count on him, yeah, we know his word is good.

Got a friend named Caroline,
She's not afraid to speak her mind.
She'll take a stand, she makes me feel I could.

CHORUS

In my science class,
Had a teacher who was really great.
And she helped me pass, 'cause she really made it fun.

Rick's the star of the baseball team,
Some say he's the best they've seen
But he doesn't brag about all the stuff he's done.

CHORUS

To hear *Who Inspires You?* go to <https://www.youtube.com/vitaminlproject> and find it there.

THE GRATITUDE REPORT

In the past year, The Vitamin L Project has been very grateful to receive contributions from numerous individuals and groups, including The Park Foundation, The Triad Foundation, The John Ben Snow Memorial Trust, Alice Saltonstall via The Middlecott Foundation, The Savage Club of Ithaca, Dr. Ira Kamp, and the Vector Magnetics Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County.

Special thanks to Paul van der Veur for creating scrolling lyric videos of all the Vitamin L songs for our YouTube channel.

**A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO
ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS!**

Center for Transformative Action

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Inspiring children since 1989!

*We keep going,
the light keep glowing
in our society.*

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



The cast for the video of "Some Rights in this World"