

Vitamin L News

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Reaching Out with Love



Upholding Vitamin L's mission—to reach and positively influence as many children as possible through our character-building music—is our ultimate purpose and inspires our organization's specific goals. Among these is ensuring that Vitamin L is reaching a culturally, ethnically, economically, and racially diverse audience.



For years we've dreamed about having a scholarship fund that would allow us to offer a sliding scale discount to schools and communities that couldn't afford to pay our full concert fees. We are delighted to report that, thanks to the wonderful generosity of the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust, Vitamin L was able to give discounted performances at 13 of the schools we visited during the 2005-2006 school year.



Through this generous grant, we reached 5,184 students and 844 adults who might otherwise not have had the chance to connect with Vitamin L. Among these, almost 4,800 students learned some of the songs in advance, enhancing their concert experience.



We are so grateful to have had this special opportunity to expand our influence where we know it's needed. We are also happy to announce that the grant was renewed for this coming school year. In fact, we will be able to combine the John Ben Snow grant with one from the Howland Foundation and another from the Tompkins Trust Company for the same purpose. These combined grants will enable Vitamin L to reach out with love and the joy of music to thousands more children at low-income schools.



Someday we hope to be able to offer a sliding scale to every school that would like Vitamin L to support its character education efforts. Wish us luck making another dream come true!



*Janice Nigro, Director
Jan Nigro, Songwriter*



From one of our alumni...



“Ultimately, the message of love we sang penetrated my core and left a lasting mark. My experience in Vitamin L helped shape the person and teacher I am today.”

Character education is curriculum designed to teach students how to be responsible citizens. By planning and implementing lessons that address values such as honesty, respect, courage, freedom, equality, kindness and generosity, educators aim to inform children of the impact of their actions and their abilities to effect positive change in their communities. It’s certainly powerful curricula. Students are drawn to it because it engages their minds and it’s relevant. Furthermore, anyone can make a connection to character education regardless of how well one can read, do math, or do science. What’s amazing about Vitamin L is that their music teaches these principles and values, and then popularizes them—they make being a good person cool.

I was in Vitamin L when I was younger (which means that I was considered cool!). Singing these songs about empathy, the value of teamwork, and living each day to its fullest taught me moral values and the practical application of those values. I knew the difference between right and wrong, but Vitamin L took that a step further and taught me to think concretely about issues of racism, sexism, the value of individuality and taking responsibility for my

actions. Beyond that, it allowed me to teach those same lessons to my peers and those close in age to myself.

Now that I’m an elementary school teacher, I infuse character education into my general curriculum; and I attribute this commitment to teaching for social justice in part to my involvement with Vitamin L as a teenager. Ultimately, the message of love we sang penetrated my core and left a lasting mark. My experience in Vitamin L helped shape the person and teacher I am today.

A month or two before I began my first teaching position at P.S. 49X in the South Bronx, I ran into Janice. (She and Jan have remained friends of mine since my “retirement” from Vitamin L ten years ago.) We were discussing my plans of moving to New York, my hopes and dreams for my first year out of college, and what I was going to teach in my classroom. At some point during the conversation, we both realized that my new career would provide wonderful opportunities for sharing Vitamin L. Janice even offered to give me all of the CDs, but I reminded her that I held onto every one of them! I took our encounter to heart, and so, in my first year as an educator, I got to use the same, still relevant material, which happened to teach me

as a child. And even when I’m not playing the tapes (yes, tapes!), my students and I are constantly playing the positive messages of Vitamin L through our learning and interactions.

Through my teaching experiences, I’ve learned that character education, and the values and principles expressed in the music of Vitamin L, should not be lessons taught in isolation of the general curriculum. For example, during history, we can learn about various perspectives on the same issue, and learn to think critically about how differing life circumstances elicit differing experiences and opinions. In our chemistry lessons, we can learn about chemists who are People of Color and women, and about the impact of chemical science on our environment. We can teach our students and ourselves about responsible citizenship throughout the school day, every day, so that our compassion can spread beyond the classroom walls. And that’s what Vitamin L is all about. It gives me great hope knowing that the Vitamin L Project and other teachers exist who are committed, as I am, to teaching for social justice. We are all working together to bring more love and acceptance into our world.

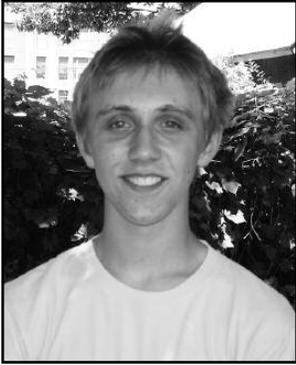
– Lily Cavanaugh,
graduate student for Special
Education, Syracuse University

The Gratitude Report

With gratitude, in the last six months The Vitamin L Project received donations from numerous individuals and groups, including a \$10,000.00 grant from The John Ben Snow Memorial Trust and a \$1,000.00 grant from the Helen Howland Foundation for performance subsidies for public schools, \$900.00 from the Puffin Foundation, \$2,500.00 from Target Stores, and \$1,500.00 from The Service League, which sells used clothing for the whole family. Our May a cappella concert and raffle raised \$3,583.00 and was great fun for all who attended.

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

From a Vitamin L member...



“My experience in Vitamin L has supported my life's goals.”

Hey Vitamin L'ers, family, friends, and alumni. My name is Tim Fuchs and I've been in Vitamin L for six awesome years. Why do I say awesome? Well, at least for me and probably many others as well, Vitamin L has been a huge part of my life. When I was younger, the group encouraged my singing. The songs were catchy and made me want to sing. For me, Vitamin L is more than just a singing group. It was my first job, it's a place where I can go and see old friends and also meet and make new friends. It is also a place where I can really practice what I want to do most in the world: sing, act, dance and entertain. My experience in Vitamin L has supported my life's goals.

When I was very young, Vitamin L performed for my school. I thought they were amazing. I don't know if I paid much attention to the song's lyrics, but nonetheless it looked and sounded like so much fun. Ivy Whipple, an older member of Vitamin L

and a student at my school, was in Vitamin L. I was even more interested in Vitamin L because Ivy was in the group! My family bought their CDs and we listened to them constantly. In my mind I pictured the day I might be in Vitamin L. Jan and Janice saw me in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* when I played the role of Tevye. They wanted me to audition for Vitamin L. I didn't really want to audition because I was influenced by my friends and I didn't know what the group was really about. But I followed my instincts, listened to positive friends and family members, and tried out for the group. Now, I have been in Vitamin L for six years and I haven't regretted a single day.

When I graduate from high school, I want to go to college to study musical theater. Working with Jan and Janice, traveling and singing with Vitamin L has given me many opportunities to become familiar with the stage and many aspects of performing. I continue to be

involved in many musicals and plays. Vitamin L has helped me enormously with my voice, stage presence, and movement.

I think that Vitamin L is a most worthwhile singing group. In my opinion, anyone who likes to sing, who wants to improve themselves vocally and support character education for growing minds, should get involved with Vitamin L. Vitamin L has changed how I feel about myself. It has built my confidence, and as a result, I am now a leader in the community.

To “Think for Yourself,” to have “Endurance,” to “Tear Down The Walls,” and to open yourself up to everything and everyone, are amazing ideals. I support Vitamin L 100% and I believe that the message of Vitamin L to promote peace and love within each individual, the community, and the world is a message that has the power to change us all.

- Tim Fuchs,
age 16, sophomore,
Dryden High School

In 2005 Vitamin L :

- performed 48 concerts
- reached 9,500 youth and 2,600 adults in concerts
- performed at 27 schools, community events, festivals, and camps
- gave leadership and performing opportunities to our 70 chorus members

Please support our unique outreach, service, and leadership work by making a tax-deductible donation to:

"THE VITAMIN L PROJECT," • 105 KING ST., ITHACA, NY 14850 • THANK YOU!



*Anna Lashley, Jan Nigro, Dezjah Berry, Addy Davidoff, Edwin Carstensen,
Nate Ruan, Tim Fuchs, Andy Lockwood, Anali Fuchs, Peggy Carey*

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Vitamin L Project is to encourage positive character development through music, by uplifting and inspiring young people with lessons that are meaningful in their daily lives. Our goal is that young listeners absorb the lessons of confidence, kindness, persistence, cooperation and forgiveness presented in the songs, and weave those concepts into the fabric of their character in ways that help them make positive choices and have healthy relationships with their families, friends and the world around them. Our goal is to reach and positively influence as many children as possible.

CRESP

The Vitamin L Project

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"Amazingly wonderful...The messages combined with memorable and singable tunes will instill positive values in timeless ways! The group's energy is contagious and appealing! Thank you for your positive and up-beat music!"
— Brenda Wright - music teacher, VEW Primary, Bath, NY

We're on the Web!
www.vitaminL.org

The Vitamin L Project is an official non-profit project of CRESP (Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy) at Cornell University.