

Vitamin L News

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A Full Circle of Inspiration

Vitamin L continually strives to inspire and positively influence as many children as possible. We get inspired right back by the thank you notes, cards, and drawings we receive from the children in our audiences.

We know that using youth singers to deliver our messages is an effective approach that is vital to our success. They are role models, heroes, and, yes, sometimes even rock stars in the eyes and hearts of the children in our audiences.

We want to share a few of the notes we've received. Enjoy!



“ You guys were awesome, and my favorite song was *Walk a Mile*. That song inspired me to apologize to my best friend. When I went to her house she was getting up to apologize to me, too. So thank you for coming 'cause my best friend would probably still hate my guts. One more thank you. ”

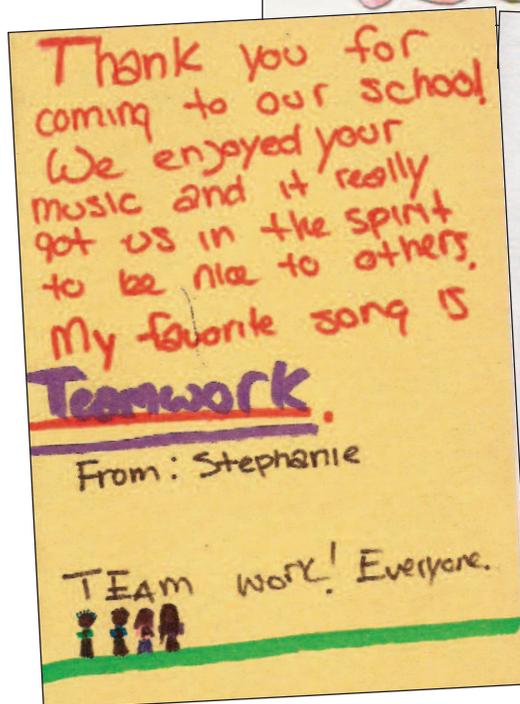
—Brianna, 5th grade

“ You guys blew my socks off. I really like it when you guys sing. You guys are my heroes. You guys told me in the songs that I should be a good friend to others. You guys are the best. You guys are my friends in my heart. ”

—Beverly, 5th grade

“ When I hear your songs, I feel so happy and joyful. ”

—Sincerely yours, Vidal



“ Dear Eliza, I think you're really good at singing, and your hair is very pretty. I think you are awesome and cool. ”

—Tiffany

“ I really appreciate you coming and singing all those songs. You really made my day! My favorite song is *Walk a Mile*. I hope that world peace happens, too. I really liked how you have the different color shirts. They look exactly like a rainbow of hope. You're right – it doesn't take much to bring a smile to a face. Thank you for coming to our school! You helped encourage kids to be nice and think twice about being rude to kids. ”

—Madison, 5th grade

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Growing Up With Vitamin L

I recently came across my original collection of Vitamin L music—cassette tapes acquired one by one years ago. As I grew up, new Vitamin L releases were vivid milestones, providing a soundtrack to car trips, play dates, and bubble baths. One of my earliest memories is of my dad, Fred, who raised me, taking me to a Vitamin L concert upstairs at the old Logos bookstore. *Walk a Mile* had just come out, and the countless times in the years ahead that I would listen, dance, and sing to it would prove valuable practice once I eventually began performing with Vitamin L.



Before long I became a groupie, arriving early for every local show to ensure a spot close enough to demonstrate my precocious readiness to perform any song asked of me, and staying behind to request autographs of my much-admired role models.

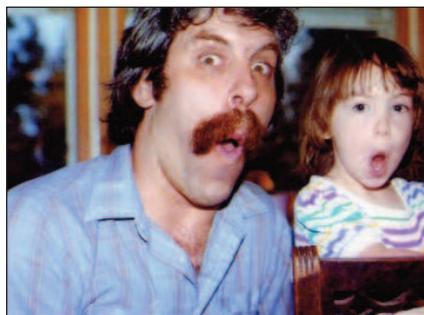
When I was eight, my Dad began to encourage me to ask Jan about the possibility of auditioning, but I wasn't quite old enough. We finally scheduled my audition for Jan and Janice the summer following my eleventh birthday. I remember feeling shy and nervous, but also eager to "express myself" and my love of Vitamin L. When I found out I was "in," I couldn't contain my excitement. Now, I had a legitimate reason to continuously blast my new Vitamin L CDs at home.

I struggled to learn all the choreography and to perfect my assigned solo parts. My

Dad was an enthusiastic accompanist, and he danced side by side with me through the ball-changes of *Every Moment* and the sign language of *With These Hands*. He even dug out a microphone and amplifier, so I could become comfortable with the equipment I'd encounter at performances. For my debut concert he took the day off work and appeared in the back of the auditorium, rented camcorder in hand, to capture my first time singing *I Made a New Friend*, the song that would become one of my favorites to perform.

My dad always made an effort to drive us to concerts, watch the end of rehearsals, and come to my performances, even after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer when I was in high school. An active local musician himself, my dad kept playing with his bands as well, one of which also featured Jan on his days off from Vitamin L!

My dad exemplified the endurance and optimism that I hoped to share with others as I performed with Vitamin L. Music and performance was his passion, and—after



my childhood of adamantly protesting every piano, violin, guitar, or drum lesson—singing with Vitamin L gave me a real opportunity to share it with him. Only several weeks before his death, my dad celebrated at his group's album release party, playing a gig upstairs at the new Autumn Leaves bookstore, the same space where we'd once attended our first Vita-



min L concert nearly fifteen years before.

Now, as I carefully pull the faded insert from around my *Walk a Mile* tape, I realize I don't need to read the lyrics. I know them by heart, and their ideals continue to inspire and motivate me. After high school, I studied Spanish literature and communication at George Washington University. Although I haven't gone on to become a performer, as have many other Vitamin L alumni, I still look for ways to reach out and engage with others around me. My time in Vitamin L was just the beginning of my interest in intercultural communication and my passion for outreach and understanding through music and the arts. It has led me to serve as a Spanish translator and advocacy intern at the Red Cross headquarters in Washington, D.C., to study art history and flamenco dance in Madrid, and to work as a student ambassador with the British Council. I'm now preparing to move again, this time to begin a master's program in culture and society at the London School of Economics.

I hope that I'll be back in Ithaca to perform *Walk a Mile* at a future Ithaca Festival, but in the meantime, instead of cassette tapes in the car, I now have Vitamin L tunes on my iPod to accompany me on my forthcoming flight.

Liz Koslov,
Vitamin L Alumna

The Gratitude Report

In the last six months The Vitamin L Project received vital donations from numerous individuals and groups, including grants of \$15,000 from the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust for concert support, \$10,000 from The Middlecott Foundation, and \$1,000 from Chemung Canal Trust.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS!
And special thanks to Apple for extraordinary service and help with our computer needs.

From Young Admirer to Role Model Performer

Hey! My name is Houso Carol Andree Semon. I've been in Vitamin L for seven years, and I can honestly say that joining is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Since elementary school I have been one of Vitamin L's biggest fans. Each year when they would come to Northeast School, I would have the members sign their names on my hand and not want to wash it off. When their names eventually wore off, I'd get upset! I'm surprised I never thought of actually using paper. In middle school, I still had Vitamin L on my mind. I really wanted to be a part of it, but I never knew

how. Some of my friends joined, and they told me they had been recommended by their music teachers. I was too shy to ask anyone if they could possibly recommend me. Luckily, one day Katarina Andersson told me that Vitamin L was looking for some new members, and I was ecstatic. I was so excited that I could not wait to go home and practice the songs that I already knew by heart.



When I was accepted into Vitamin L, I was the shiest kid, and I would hardly smile. I wouldn't really try solos, and when I did I was too nervous to sing out with my full voice. It took time, and gradually I became much more comfortable on stage. My first concert was overwhelming because I had never really performed for a large crowd before, whether it was for kids, or my family, or even for my peers. Up to that point, I was more of an ambitious "shower singer!" I always told people that I would make an impact with music, and Vitamin L was my first step in that direction.

By the time I started ninth grade, I was no longer shy in Vitamin L. Things just seemed to change for me then, and because I was no longer so tentative, I became a better role model for the kids in our audiences. To be a role model is one of the biggest responsibilities because kids choose to admire you, and in return I wanted to show them how to make posi-

tive decisions in their lives.

My favorite part of Vitamin L is seeing all of those kids' faces light up when we sing to them. This really shows me that we are making a difference and that they are really listening to the lyrics. We all know that as some kids get older their interest in Vitamin L decreases. At least at the beginning of concerts, sometimes the fifth and sixth graders are sitting in the back, not smiling because they think that's the "cool" thing to do. In the end, they completely forget about being self-conscious and enjoy themselves, and it's a great feeling to see the influence of Vitamin L's music.

I've grown up with Vitamin L: I grew up listening to Vitamin L, and then I became a member. I know Vitamin L is a local group, but I believe that the Vitamin L message is meant for much more than New York State. It's meant for the entire world to listen and rejoice to. Eventually we will get there. We've gotten so far with New York State, why not go for the rest of the states and the world? Nothing is impossible.

Houso Carol Semon,
Senior, Ithaca High School

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“ I loved all of your songs. Thank you for coming to our school. I bet you bring a smile to everybody. You guys are bringing a *Mighty Power* to everybody. You guys are wicked cool, you are really awesome! ”
—Your friend, *Cheyenne*

“ Nate, have you ever considered trying out for being a rock star? You are great. ”
— *Austin, 4th grade*

“ I like that you have kindness and honesty. ”
—*Mariah*

“ Dear Edwin, You are a great singer. You guys are the best singers in the world!!! I wish you could be the kings and queens of kids music. Edwin, I love your hair. It's awesome!!! Thank you for coming!! ”
—*Deirdre, 3rd grade*

“ You guys ROCK! Your music has really changed how I think about the world, my friends and everything else. ”
—*Emily, 5th Grade*





Please support our unique outreach, service, and leadership work by making a tax-deductible donation online at www.vitaminL.org, or to:
The Vitamin L Project • 105 King St. • Ithaca, NY 14850 • Thank You!

CRESP

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*"Vitamin L is even more effective because they are 'cool kids!' The students are better influenced by peers."
- Karen Baker, teacher, Severn Elementary*

www.vitaminL.org

The Vitamin L Project is a Project Partner of The CRESP Center for Transformative Action at Cornell University