

# Vitamin L News

Fall 2017



Vitamin L alum Sam Harris is in the X Ambassadors, a multi-platinum selling rock band that performs around the world. Some of their well-known songs are "Renegades," "Unsteady," and "Jungle." Sam sings lead vocals, writes songs, and plays sax and guitar for the band.

We first met Sam and heard him sing when he was in 5th grade, and his musical talent was quite evident right away. Sam went on to perform numerous Vitamin L concerts for seven years. It has been a pleasure to see Sam, his brother Casey and their bandmates have the opportunity to share their music worldwide.

We are moved and happy that Sam and the band celebrate unity, diversity and self-acceptance through their music and their actions. They actively support causes they believe in, including the ACLU and Planned Parenthood.

In a Billboard interview on 2/23/2017 Sam said: "It's up to those of us who really want to stand up for other people's rights to do something about it. I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I didn't try to fight for people who are feeling like their human rights are being infringed upon. Then I'm not doing my job as a citizen of this country, as a citizen of the world, and as an artist... We've always been aware of speaking up for people whose voices aren't often heard, and standing up for "disenfranchised" people in this country and this world. That is totally a part of who we are intrinsically as a band and who we want to speak for...We always want to support people who feel like their voices aren't being heard. It's part of who we are and how we grew up."

To see the X Ambassadors in Ithaca, you can attend the Cayuga Sound Festival, which they are hosting and curating at Stewart Park on Sat. Sept. 23. Two stages will be set up in the park, with a mix of national touring acts, friends of the band, and world class talent from Ithaca.

The festival plans to celebrate local businesses as well as support ten Ithaca area non-profits, including Vitamin L! Thank you to Sam and his bandmates for this wonderful support to Vitamin L and our community!

If you attend, stop by the Vitamin L display and say hello. To get tickets and learn more about the weekend of events that are planned, go to: <https://www.cayugasoundfestival.com>.



Sam Harris



Vitamin L continues to work for love, kindness and compassion in this difficult time in our country. On Sept. 10, some Vitamin L members sang at an event for the Ithaca Coalition for Unity and Cooperation in the Middle East (ICUCME). They are a grassroots, anti-racist community organization that embraces fact-based, respectful dialogue, mutual recognition and cooperation to promote justice in the Middle East. Like Vitamin L, they aim to promote unity and peace. To read more about the event and the organization go to <https://icu-cme.org/2017/09/11/2017-building-unity-cleaning-the-hate/>.

## Reflection on Vitamin L from an Alumna



The lights, the fame, the applause.... the paycheck! As a sixth grade drama-enthusiast new to Ithaca, this was pretty incredible. My Vitamin L audition was one of the first events I had in Ithaca. My mother had recently “ruined my life” by moving me away from my friends right before middle school, where we would all have been together, and I couldn’t imagine Ithaca ever feeling like my real home. Vitamin L was integral to this transition to pre-teen-hood. I was able to do what I loved most, sing onstage with my peers. I was able to make like-minded friends before I even started school!

Participating in this organization taught me to be responsible and to feel proud of my contributions. I benefited from the knowledge that I was making positive contributions, spreading joy and love, and from compensation for my time and work. Being part of Vitamin L supported my development as a vocalist and performer, while allowing me to share concrete, positive messages to children locally and beyond. The friendships I forged during that universally difficult time of life (middle school!) have sustained my growth through the years. I recently attended the wedding of a dear friend, Nathalie Louge, who I met that first summer 21 years ago. I will be forever thankful to Jan and Janice for providing the platform for relationships like this to blossom.

The amazing thing about Vitamin L is that my appreciation, respect, and admiration for both the organization and the Nigros’, have only grown stronger in my adulthood. Jan is an incredible musician, and both Jan and Janice have been and continue to be pillars of the Ithaca community in both what they do and how they do it. They actively recruit a diverse group and continue to support and “check-in” beyond the Vitamin L years. I am now a second grade teacher in Ithaca and continue to firmly believe that our young people are not only capable of immense love, caring and strength, but yearn for the opportunity for growth in making sense of the complex world around them.

Music is an incredibly inclusive way to participate, express, and share. In a world that continues to struggle with racism, hatred, bigotry, inequality, and war, how lucky we are to have Vitamin L as a resource—both as an example of how to help empower this next generation to be the best versions of themselves, and to ensure that there are grown folks who believe in love and change.

I recently joined Vitamin L in a song onstage during a performance at my school and was brought to tears when I saw my students dancing, singing, smiling, and expressing their joy through the music and lyrics of Vitamin L singing about justice, acceptance, what makes us unique and connected, and everyday problems, both big and “small.” (The song “Jumping to Conclusions” goes through my mind more than occasionally, and I giggle out loud when a line or two slips out subconsciously). I have used and continue to use Vitamin L songs to help support my social justice framework in my classroom. (My students are always very excited to hear that I was a member for more than 7 years.)

Vitamin L has this incredible ability to shape lives on many levels, no matter one’s age. Even if young people see it simply as fun and joyous, the message really sinks in as you grow. That joy and fun is entwined with words of truth, wisdom, and empowerment—empowerment to make positive changes in the world, to stand up for yourself and others, and to know that children can help lift each other up, even when, or perhaps especially when, they stumble or struggle. It is our job as parents, educators, and community members to support this growth because *“Just by being born every boy and girl, automatically got some rights in this world.”*

s  
- Hope Darcey-Martin, Teacher,  
Beverly J. Martin Elementary, Ithaca, NY and Vitamin L Alum



**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!

## A Family's Participation



The van der Veur family has been happy to be part of Vitamin L for the past five years. Kurt began singing with Vitamin L in 2012 when he was in 6th grade, and his younger brother, Kris, started singing with Vitamin L two years ago when he was in the same grade. In the meantime, their dad, Paul, has been creating 52 scrolling lyric videos for the Vitamin L YouTube channel.

Kurt enjoys singing, and he has found it rewarding to participate in Vitamin L because it spreads a lot of positive messages to other kids. It's also been a cool way to meet new people of all ages. He was very excited to meet civil rights activist Dorothy Cotton, who warmly befriended the singers and told stories about her rich life experiences during the Civil Rights Movement with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Kurt's favorite Vitamin L song is Martin's Heart from the "Sing for Dr. King" CD, a CD in which he sings in the chorus.

Kris has practically grown up with Vitamin L songs because he often heard his older brother singing "Walk a Mile" or other Vitamin L songs at home. Early on, Kris knew he wanted to be a part of Vitamin L. Kris likes being in Vitamin L because the songs teach kids valuable lessons, and the other singers in the group are nice. His favorite part of being in Vitamin L is performing in the concerts.

Paul, their dad, saw an opportunity to use his technical and teaching skills by creating scrolling lyric videos for the Vitamin L YouTube channel. He involved some of his SUNY Cortland New Media students in making these videos to show them positive ways to apply their production skills. He also wanted to be involved in the community and acknowledge the positive impact that Vitamin L has had on his own children. Both boys are looking forward to singing together in a concert at their former school, Barry Elementary, in Cortland this coming January.

- Shirley van der Veur,  
ESL Teacher, Cortland High School, and Vitamin L mom

**Chorus auditions are ongoing for youth currently  
in 6th - 10th grades.**

**For more info call 273-4175 or  
contact us at [vitaminlproject@hotmail.com](mailto:vitaminlproject@hotmail.com).**

**Update on Vitamin L's YouTube channel:** Vitamin L's YouTube channel has 58,733 views to date. Here are a few comments on our "Walk a Mile" video that was released in February:

*"It feels supremely great to be reminded of what we CAN be like as humans. To all you students, families, creative engineers and innovators, THANK YOU for this extension of love to all of us. I will continue to share this with everyone I know."*

*"Wonderful! The whole world should see this!"*

*"Very moving! Excellent all around, the music, the choir, the acting, videography! Really great!"*

*"Thank-You, Jan, and all the members of Vitamin L for bringing the universality of Love to the diversity of humanity in the true spirit of what the world really needs now, unity in diversity. After all, we are all one family of humankind, learning how to really Love one another. Your music is truly a divine gift to us all."*

The channel now has a fun video montage compiled by filmmaker Jeff Hodges of singers from far and wide (including New Zealand) performing "Walk a Mile." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt4CbKXvGv0>  
See all of our videos at Vitamin L's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/vitaminlproject>.

## Recycle, Reuse Yard Sale Fundraiser

Vitamin L held a fun and successful multi-family yard sale and bake on Saturday Sept. 2. Thank you to many volunteers who helped with this sale in various ways.

The funds raised from the sale will be doubled by the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust and go towards providing partial scholarships for Vitamin L to perform at low-income schools in Central New York. Vitamin L must raise \$5,000.00 by December 15th for this matching grant and the Sept. 2 sale brought in over \$1,800.00 toward the match!

Several alumni families and community friends donated a variety of furniture and all sorts of interesting and useful items, even a chicken coop! The sale went so well that the advisory board has decided to hold the sale again on the same Saturday next year on Sat. Sept. 1.

So Vitamin L will be accepting donations for the sale through the year. Board member Patricia Haines Gooding has graciously offered to store the donated items in her barn on Slaterville Rd. (Route 79). So if you are clearing out basements, closets, and garages or simply downsizing and simplifying life, please consider donating things you don't need or use anymore to Vitamin L for our next sale!

To drop off donations at Patricia's, contact her at [levelgreen2010@gmail.com](mailto:levelgreen2010@gmail.com). And....the chicken coop didn't sell yet, so if you are interested in it, please contact Patricia.

Center for Transformative Action  
**The Vitamin L Project**  
Anabel Taylor Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
(607) 273-4175  
vitaminLproject@hotmail.com

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
Permit No. 780

**Inspiring children since 1989!**

**Vitamin L**  
sings at the  
**Apple Harvest Festival**  
Saturday, Sept. 30  
12:00 - 12:45  
Ithaca Commons Stage

For concert schedule and more info: [www.vitaminL.org](http://www.vitaminL.org)

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

### *Vitamin L's music*

- \* *Touches Hearts and Inspires Positive Change*
- \* *Spreads Love and Goodwill*
- \* *Reminds children that it is cool to be kind, caring, and respectful.*

