

# Vitamin L News

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## Vitamin L Turns 20! *We want to say thanks, oh, Yeah!*

In 1989, we embarked on a magical journey and recorded our first album, "Walk a Mile," with Vitamin L songwriter and co-founder Jan Nigro and additional lead singers Cass Morgan, Curtis King, Kelli Crofton, Deborah Stoll, and Tremaine Jackson. Our team was rounded out by producer and arranger extraordinaire Jeff Waxman and our executive director and co-founder Janice Nigro (all pictured in top left photo, page 3). Eleven area youth, pictured here (top right), added their voices to the recording, which won the national Parents' Choice Gold Award.

Over the next 20 years, we released three more award-winning recordings of Jan's Vitamin L songs and evolved into an organization with a year-round performance group. Vitamin L has performed close to 800 concerts at schools, festivals, community events, and conferences, reaching more than a quarter-million children and adults in central New York and beyond. Vitamin L's meaningful messages have reached countless more children around the world through use of our CDs in schools and homes.

There have been countless highlights: performing at the United Nations for World Children's Day, concerts at multiple education conferences around the country, and honors, including a Certificate of



Recognition from the Governor of New York "for being in the forefront of helping to promote the ideals of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by promoting peace in our schools and communities," the Tompkins County Distinguished Youth Award "in recognition of outstanding commitment to our community," and the Tompkins County Human Rights Award for Vitamin L's efforts on behalf of equal rights.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to all past and present chorus members, advisory board members, and loyal individual and foundation supporters.

Working with countless talented youth and witnessing them grow as performers and as people has been a great delight!

We have been blessed to do transformative work we believe in for 20 years, using music to inspire youth with messages to grow on. Here's to a future of hope, integrity, and peace—and many more years of inspiration through music!

***We want to say thanks, oh, yeah!!!***



# From An Alumni Member...

## *Vitamin L Provides Rich Opportunities for Growth*

I was “discovered” at Boynton Middle School in a performance of *Grease* where I played Johnny Casino and led the song “Hand-Jive.” Like many youth growing up in the Ithaca community, I had idolized Vitamin L and I thought some of the members in the group were very cool. After being asked and expressing interest, I took the training tapes home and worked hard to prepare for my audition. Looking back on how the dances and movements became second nature to me, I am amazed at how hard I had to work to get it down. I think I wore out the tape trying to get songs like “With These Hands.” I am glad I put in the work alone and in those Saturday morning rehearsals because I was rewarded with an invaluable experience. I performed with Vitamin L from the summer after sixth grade until I graduated from Ithaca High School and headed to Miami, Florida to attend Florida International University.

Vitamin L was a great experience for me. Being in Vitamin L gave me confidence in my abilities and in myself. It helped me to be comfortable with myself through a time, adolescence, when a lot of people are not. I learned that I had the power to influence, uplift, and encourage others. I experienced the healing and community-building power of music. Vitamin L provided a powerful experience at a young age. I had the op-

portunity to perform all over the state and got to take trips with the group to St. Louis, Atlanta, Arkansas, and San Diego. These were trips that I would not have been able to take otherwise. While traveling we were encouraged to think forward to our future and to visit schools, which I did, even though I was younger than most students visiting colleges. I took the opportunity to visit Washington University in St. Louis and San Diego State. Vitamin L gave me a group of like-minded individuals to grow up with, who truly supported diversity and individuality. It was great to come into my own surrounded by the kids in Vitamin L.

Vitamin L gave me the opportunity to perform. I was able to express myself and give back to the community through a very unique outlet. There are far too few places in our society that promote positive messages through a positive medium. Vitamin L is a project that does just that and needs to be supported and promoted. It really instills values in a fun way. I always looked forward to the concerts. They gave me an escape from the monotony of school. It was an adventure to get piled into a minivan, and be part of a caravan led by a blue Subaru in the days before cell phones and GPS. I would be in the back of some car with my ShortStop Italian sub dripping and piled high with peppers and onions, ready for a new adventure and eager to



be on stage.

During college, I worked for two Marriott properties in Miami, while I majored in Hospitality Management. I also pledged a fraternity and became its president a year later. I was involved in Student Government at the University level as an Intern, then Housing Representative and went on to become Judicial Board Chair. I joined ROTC the summer before my junior year and am now an officer in the New York Army National Guard. Currently, I am a manager at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, renting cars out of their Dorschel Lexus location. During my junior year, I met my future wife, Christie Peterson, from Rochester, N.Y. We are expecting our first child in July. Vitamin L has been such an important part of my life, and I hope that it continues to grow and thrive so that my child and other children will grow up listening to the positive messages of Vitamin L.

- Charlie Blake



*Charlie in Atlanta with Vitamin L, October 2002*



## Save the Date!

### Vitamin L's 20th Birthday Concert!

**Saturday August 8th at the Hangar Theatre  
10 am & noon. Tickets available at the door  
or in advance from Cat's Pajamas.**

**Celebrate with us at a special concert  
featuring current members and alumni!**

# Vitamin L

*Happy 20th Birthday!*





# From A Current Member...

## *The Power of Kindness Reaches Us All*

I first heard of Vitamin L the spring of my freshman year. Trumansburg High School was performing *The Pirates of Penzance*, and I was cast as Ruth. Since some of the performers were already in Vitamin L, Jan and Janice Nigro came to watch. Luckily for me, my voice caught their attention. Janice almost didn't bother investigating who I was, ready to assume that I was an upperclassman and too old to begin training for Vitamin L. But when she looked me up in the show program, she was pleasantly surprised to find that I was a 9th grader, and perfectly eligible. Not long after the show closed, I got a call from Janice, inviting me to audition. While I was excited at the time, I had no idea just how beneficial the experience would be for me.

Joining Vitamin L has proved to be more rewarding than I could ever have imagined. At my first rehearsal, I was shy and clueless, but I learned quickly that the atmosphere was one of acceptance. People I'd never met before, who went to different schools, reached out to me, introducing themselves and helping me feel at home during practices. As Janice assigned solos to people throughout the rehearsal, I discovered that none of these kids were ones to shy away from the opportunity to sing alone. With all the energy and enthusiasm in the air, I knew I'd done the right thing by becoming a part of Vitamin L.

Having been a part of this lovely chorus for three years now, I can hon-

estly say it has reminded me to never lose sight of the power of kindness. We might think of Vitamin L songs as strictly for children because we sing them to young audiences. The songs were written so that young children can understand and use the messages to lay a foundation for their personal virtues. The fact is that nobody should be ignoring or taking for granted the words we sing. It's easy to grow up and put other things, like ambition or luxury, ahead of courtesy and tolerance. While these songs are indeed targeted toward a younger audience, I believe they are very different from other "story-time" type songs designed merely to amuse. The effortless way that Vitamin L succeeds in entertaining and building character is unique. The difference is that if the color and smiles were stripped away, the words maintain integrity and worth. I have never doubted that people of any age should appreciate this about Vitamin L.

This being the case, the fact that I



was invited to be a part of this engine for love and tolerance is touching to me. I have been lucky enough to spread these common values around to children from all walks of life, near and far. And when I am busy building the rest of my life, I will carry these values with me and know that I've worked to better the world in my own way, however humble.

- Eliza Vann, senior  
Trumansburg High School

*Eliza plans to study musical theatre in college, and we wish her all the best!*



*Eliza singing with Vitamin L on 2/13/09*

**Please support our unique outreach, service, and leadership work by making a tax-deductible donation online at**

**[www.vitaminl.org](http://www.vitaminl.org), or send to:**

**The Vitamin L Project**

**105 King St. • Ithaca, NY 14850**

**Thank You!**

### THE GRATITUDE REPORT

In the last six months The Vitamin L Project received donations from numerous individuals and groups, including grants of \$10,000.00 from the Triad Foundation, \$10,000.00 from a foundation that wishes to remain anonymous, and \$800.00 from The Service League.

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



*Jan Nigro, Safira, Sarah, Amy, Ahmed, Sari, Eliza, Geoff, Alex, Tommy, Johnathan, Kyle and Carol at Meachem Elementary in Syracuse, 3/13/09.*

## **In 2008, Vitamin L:**

- \* Performed 57 concerts*
- \* Reached 14,200 youth and 3,800 adults in concerts.*
- \* Performed at 33 schools and 12 festivals and community events.*
- \* Gave leadership and performing opportunities to our 80 chorus members*

CRESP

### **The Vitamin L Project**

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Join us for our 20th Birthday  
Concert on August 8th!  
(See page 2 for more details.)**

**[www.vitaminL.org](http://www.vitaminL.org)**

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