Just like the rest of the world, Concordia Language Villages has had an unprecedented year. As a residential camp focused on global citizenry, we were acutely aware of the global health scene and began monitoring the news of an emerging global pandemic in late January 2020. While we watched our international colleagues in Europe and Asia navigate the surge of COVID-19 cases, our hearts went out to them and we quickly realized that even with our long-standing history of running our villages through pandemics such as H1N1, in 2020 we could not continue with a business as usual approach.

2020 PILOT TO VIRTUAL

As our Health and Wellness team carefully monitored the pandemic on local, national and international levels, we disappointedly canceled our spring 2020 Academic programs. After much deliberation, we were devastated to reach the difficult decision to transition our summer programming entirely into Virtual Villages.
As we pivoted to create our Virtual Village programs, we simultaneously made careful plans to host a much smaller group of our summer deans and counselors at our own facilities in Northern Minn.

This would ultimately serve two very important components. First, it helped create authentic Concordia Language Village online experiences. Secondly, from the outset, the literature has been clear that congregate living settings are higher risk areas and we knew we had to be extremely diligent in designing in-residence practices that would be as safe as possible.

Our pilot group of staff members who traveled to and worked on-site was critically important in teaching us how we would need to adapt our Villages to the global reality of COVID.
In preparation for our pilot project, we reluctantly closed down our Villages to all friends and visitors and our essential full-time staff began to follow their own tailored health protocols.

Then, between June and August, 133 dedicated summer staff members from 22 different states and four different countries came to live and work at Concordia Language Villages.

To protect our local community, staff traveled directly to the Villages and remained isolated on site for the duration of their time. They all followed carefully crafted health protocols that required them to quarantine for two weeks on-site and included regular health checks, working in small pods, wearing masks, spatial distancing and enhanced disinfecting routines.
SUCCESS

We are incredibly pleased to report that we did not have any cases of COVID-19 on-site and though operating camp without villagers was certainly different than our usual summers, as an organization we learned a tremendous amount. Having lived through the changes, our counselors have helped us refine plans as we draft procedures for summer 2021 residential programs. We are also learning from the camps who successfully or unsuccessfully ran camp in summer 2020.

CREATING A COVID-RESILIENT CAMP

As 2020 fades into 2021, the Health and Wellness team at Concordia Language Villages remains vigilant in monitoring the global pandemic. We accept that COVID will be with us for longer than any of us would like and that the best we can do for now is to design the most targeted risk mitigation strategies available. We are using everything we can to craft a playbook that will help you and your kids return to the Villages for Village Weekends and summer 2021 residential programs. We miss you!