

In the summer of 2025 I had the precious opportunity to return to Italy and visit the Angelicum and Adjuvantes Onlus. Both of these places were once, almost two decades ago, part of my daily routine as I studied at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Angelicum and worked for Adjuvantes Onlus.

I will not even try to hide the fact that, as I visited these familiar places, my feelings conflicted with each other. On the one hand, it was a great pleasure to see these places again and discover new things about them, but on the other, I remembered the regret of having left everything years ago when, for work related opportunities, I moved with my family to Nebraska in the United States, where I still live to this day. I do not regret having followed the needs of a young and growing family but I do regret having had to choose to leave a job that I loved. Adjuvantes was a great place for me to work, and where I felt appreciated for what I was doing. At Adjuvantes I was able to offer professionalism and help to international students coming to study at the Angelicum. This made me feel like being part of a complex collaborative team. We all worked together for the good, wellbeing, and growth of our students. My role was to help them to arrive in Italy with a study visa, to take them to their new home, and to help them to be successful as students at the Angelicum.

From the first moment of their arrival to Rome they became the main part of my focus: greeting them and walking with them every step of the way to become familiar with their new reality. Witnessing their initial surprise and curiosity as they took their first steps in Rome and noticed the beauty, history, and chaos of the city, was one of my favorite parts. Being in my role allowed me to offer support to them not just for their academic success, but also as they navigated young adult life in a foreign country. These students were seeking education and growth and I was there for them. to help them achieve this goal. Students on that first day carried an almost invisible weight. They were not just going to be facing academic challenges; they were navigating a new language, a completely unfamiliar culture, and, often, the lingering effects of leaving home and family and dealing with a new journey. In my role at Adjuvantes Onlus my first job was addressing housing and immediate needs but also keeping in mind the student's holistic well-being.

This experience significantly shaped

my professional development, equipping me with essential skills that I apply daily in my role as a school social worker. The ability to understand complex situations and identify holistic solutions is crucial. In my current work, I often need to consider various factors and perspectives to provide effective support and resources to the families I serve. My time at Adjuvantes instilled in me a commitment to comprehensive, tailored care, based on an individual's needs, ensuring that these latter are met in a meaningful and impactful way.

Providing a safe roof over a person's head, and a warm meal, is foundational, but the challenges of a new life run far deeper than simple logistics. Once basic needs are met, students often face a new, silent struggle: the battle against isolation and the pressure of adaptation. They need to navigate rigorous academic demands while simultaneously processing culture shock, language barriers, and the profound ache of separation from their support networks. This is where the true heart of the work of Adjuvantes Onlus lies. The organization transforms from a provider of services into a nurturing ecosystem, focused on creating a community where students not only survive but truly thrive. By offering mentorship, cultural integration programs, and psychosocial support, Adjuvantes acts as a critical bridge and a new home, allowing these young scholars to focus on their education, secure in the knowledge that they are supported by a dedicated, collaborative team that sees them as whole people, not just students.

In addition to their academic studies, many students actively engaged in various university projects. These experiences were instrumental in fostering the development of essential organizational abilities and cultivating the capacity for effective teamwork. Furthermore, students had the opportunity to participate in the "Corso in Management delle Organizzazioni del Terzo Settore", a specialized training program designed to equip both students and recent graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge for successful careers within the non-profit sector.

Adjuvantes Onlus, Above and beyond support

Dora Monica Adam

This comprehensive program provides practical training and insights into the unique challenges and opportunities present in the non-profit world up to the present day.

My return to the Angelicum and the familiar Adjuvantes Onlus was not just a journey back in time; it was a potent reminder of an enduring mission. What I saw reinforced my understanding that Adjuvantes is not simply a service provider; it is an act of investment in the whole person. The most profound support offered is not found in the documents processed or the beds provided, but in the sustained effort to dismantle that "invisible weight" of feeling alone. I can attest to this firsthand, as I, myself, have navigated the complexities of immigrant life not once, but twice (from Romania to Italy and then from Italy to the United States). My initial experience unfolded in Italy during the year 2003. Following the completion of my master's degree in Social Work in Romania, I relocated to Italy to pursue employment opportunities. At that juncture, my age mirrored that of the students I was privileged to assist while working for Adjuvantes Onlus. With their narratives I could recognize patterns of my own thinking and feeling, solidifying my understanding of the crucial role holistic support plays in fostering resilience, adapting to a new environment, and well-being rooted in new beginnings.

By transforming a foreign city into a nurturing ecosystem and an apartment building into a home, Adjuvantes ensures that these young scholars are free to focus their energy not just on passing exams, but on integrating, contributing, and thriving. The team cultivates resilient, globally aware young adults—future leaders who carry not only a degree from a prestigious university but also the deep understanding that they are valuable, seen, and supported. My brief visit confirmed that the spirit of collaboration and holistic well-being remains the true, vibrant heartbeat of Adjuvantes, a legacy that I am proud to have once been a part of, and one that continues to shape the world: one supported student at a time.