A HAWK'S TALE

Karen Romero ’93

A Life Full of glee

“I loved television and movies as a child. When we went to the movies, I always wanted to stay until the credits rolled so I could see all the names and jobs that people did. Back then, I didn’t know I wanted to be a producer, but I knew I wanted to be involved in the process of making TV/movies somehow.”

That’s Karen Romero ’93 talking about when she first realized what her career would be. Romero, a mass communication major in the School of Communication in the University of Hartford’s College of Arts and Sciences, is now a coproducer on the hit Fox television show Glee.

Now in its fifth season, the weekly, hour-long, primetime series revolves around the relationships, sexuality, social issues, and team efforts of the fictional McKinley High School glee club, New Directions. Thanks to the poignant solos and the dazzling production numbers, Glee has won every major award from Golden Globe to Emmy to Peabody, been syndicated worldwide, released several soundtrack albums, and even coined its own term—Gleeks (Glee + “geeks”)—to describe its millions of enthusiastic fans.

From her earlier work on Fox’s popular Malcolm in the Middle and other shows, her professional path has stayed true and steady since her undergraduate days. So how did she get her start in the business?

“I had a friend from high school who worked on Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman. He helped me get my foot in the door as a PA [production assistant]. It was a hard and thankless job, but whatever I was asked to do, I didn’t just do it, I went above and beyond. For example, PAs are always asked to get coffee. So I would make sure the coffee was in special mugs and every choice of cream and sugar you could imagine. After that, it was hard work and dedication. I feel by always going that extra mile, even for mundane jobs, I put myself on the right radars for the right reasons. Even today, I continued with that philosophy: Do the best you can do at whatever it is you are doing.”

Romero has been with Glee from the beginning, first as production coordinator, then production supervisor, and now coproducer.

“Trying to list my responsibilities is not an easy task. Even people who work in ‘the business’ don’t know what producers do. It’s a little bit of everything. For example, a typical day for me could be breaking down scripts, working on budgets, figuring out our shooting schedule around an actor’s availability, making sure we have someone who can breath fire for an upcoming performance, checking about glow-in-the-dark wigs and makeup, wrangling our cast for their flu shots, figuring out a way to launch one of our cast members out of a cannon. (Yes, we actually did that in Season 2). The list is endless!” says Romero.

Professor Lynne Kelly, director of the School of Communication, had Romero in her classes, one of which was Organizational Communication. She recalls that Romero’s collaborative project group in the class gave the future producer “very high marks for her role in the group—even back then she was demonstrating the skills of coordinating people involved in a project.”

Romero, too, remembers things she took with her from the University of Hartford, along with four intensely productive years and her diploma.

“My mass communication professors [Roger Desmond, Kelly, and James Keener] were so dedicated and passionate about what they were teaching, they inspired me to be my best. I was a sponge because I wanted to learn everything. They always said to ‘do what you love.’”

What’s next for Karen Romero? “Personally, becoming a mother. My wife and I are due to have our first child in April. Professionally, I never want Glee to end—but, of course, it will. When it does, I can only hope that my next show will be just as exciting and challenging as Glee has been.”