The first time she saw an “A-list” star on the studio lot at Sony Pictures, Stephanie Fleming Montessi ’02 admits she was a bit star-struck. However, after four years with Sony Pictures the human resources director now walks by the stars and smiles, just as she does with all her coworkers.

Montessi is part of an HR team that supports employees in Sony Digital Productions – one of the studio’s major divisions. The division produces film, visual effects, animation, and interactive content. This summer’s The Amazing Spider-Man and Men in Black 3, for example, included visual effects created at the Academy Award®-winning Sony Pictures Imageworks. Other films, like Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs and the upcoming Hotel Transylvania, were produced by Sony Pictures Animation.

In her HR role, Montessi supports and advises business and creative leaders in decisions involving employees including performance management, compensation, learning and development, and talent planning. “Human resources is evolving from what it used to be (personnel) to what it is today – a strategic partnership,” she said. “It is imperative that I keep up with the latest trends in human resources so that I can give educated, relevant and impactful advice to leaders and employees.”

A marketing major at Assumption, Montessi was encouraged to pursue a career in human resources during an on-campus interview with the Cintas Corporation. It was the beginning of an unanticipated career path. She spent six months as an HR assistant with Cintas before a promotion to HR manager of the Boston and then New York City facilities. Next, she was hired as a regional HR manager with Otis Elevator Company before relocating to California in 2008 to work at Sony. After two years in recruitment, she was promoted to her current role.

According to Montessi, HR in the entertainment industry differs from HR in other industries due to the fast-paced schedule of producing and distributing films and television. Employee creativity and innovation are highly valued, and Sony Pictures seeks to build a strong sense of community, Montessi believes. The Sony Pictures Digital group works hard to make fun a part of its corporate culture, and inspires creativity through activities such as outdoor meetings, “energy breaks” and lunchtime Ping Pong games.

Montessi enjoys the entertainment industry for many reasons. “We produce exciting products that are a highly visible part of people’s lives,” she said. “So much work from hundreds of talented individuals goes into the production of a movie. It’s a massive undertaking, and the fast-paced culture and competitiveness of the industry keeps you moving and sharp.”

Her Assumption education and experiences prepared her for this high-powered, non-traditional environment. “I arrived at Assumption thinking that I wanted to be a doctor and came out an HR professional,” she explained. “It happened because I took classes in many disciplines before deciding on my major, and I kept my mind open while interviewing for jobs. I studied abroad in London, took business courses internationally, and traveled around Europe. I felt so well rounded coming out of Assumption, and I feel like I use knowledge from all my course work in my career.”

Montessi is part of an HR team that supports employees in Sony Digital Productions – one of the studio’s major divisions. The division produces film, visual effects, animation, and interactive content. This summer’s The Amazing Spider-Man and Men in Black 3, for example, included visual effects created at the Academy Award®-winning Sony Pictures Imageworks. Other films, like Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs and the upcoming Hotel Transylvania, were produced by Sony Pictures Animation.

In her HR role, Montessi supports and advises business and creative leaders in decisions involving employees including performance management, compensation, learning and development, and talent planning. “Human resources is evolving from what it used to be (personnel) to what it is today – a strategic partnership,” she said. “It is imperative that I keep up with the latest trends in human resources so that I can give educated, relevant and impactful advice to leaders and employees.”

A marketing major at Assumption, Montessi was encouraged to pursue a career in human resources during an on-campus interview with the Cintas Corporation. It was the beginning of an unanticipated career path. She spent six months as an HR assistant with Cintas before a promotion to HR manager of the Boston and then New York City facilities. Next, she was hired as a regional HR manager with Otis Elevator Company before relocating to California in 2008 to work at Sony. After two years in recruitment, she was promoted to her current role.

According to Montessi, HR in the entertainment industry differs from HR in other industries due to the fast-paced schedule of producing and distributing films and television. Employee creativity and innovation are highly valued, and Sony Pictures seeks to build a strong sense of community, Montessi believes. The Sony Pictures Digital group works hard to make fun a part of its corporate culture, and inspires creativity through activities such as outdoor meetings, “energy breaks” and lunchtime Ping Pong games.

Montessi enjoys the entertainment industry for many reasons. “We produce exciting products that are a highly visible part of people’s lives,” she said. “So much work from hundreds of talented individuals goes into the production of a movie. It’s a massive undertaking, and the fast-paced culture and competitiveness of the industry keeps you moving and sharp.”

Her Assumption education and experiences prepared her for this high-powered, non-traditional environment. “I arrived at Assumption thinking that I wanted to be a doctor and came out an HR professional,” she explained. “It happened because I took classes in many disciplines before deciding on my major, and I kept my mind open while interviewing for jobs. I studied abroad in London, took business courses internationally, and traveled around Europe. I felt so well rounded coming out of Assumption, and I feel like I use knowledge from all my course work in my career.”

Montessi’s broad liberal arts education also helped her recognize that lifelong learning is essential to her personal and professional growth. Since graduation, Montessi has earned a Professional in Human Resources certificate from the Society for Human Resources, and she will complete her master’s degree in human resources development at Villanova University next year. Memberships in the Institute for Corporate Productivity and the Center for Creative Leadership enable her to keep her finger on the pulse of the industry and gain new ideas of how to help lead and inspire employees.

Now when she watches a Sony Pictures movie and reads the credits at the end she can put faces and personalities to the names and know that she had a part in hiring and helping to train, motivate, promote and reward many of those people. “It is so gratifying to see a project come to life on the big screen and know that my team and I had an impact,” says Montessi. “I often have to stop, look around and think to myself, ‘Do I really work here? Am I really a part of all this? I am so fortunate.’”

The demands of her career are balanced by her commitment to the other dimensions of her life. Strong family ties and her friends from Assumption keep her grounded and offer unfailing encouragement. She married Michael Montessi last October, and they plan to start a family. In her free time, Montessi is a certified group fitness instructor, and she has completed two triathlons and three half marathons. The concept of balance is one that Montessi has embrace since she was a President’s Scholar and a Second Team All-American field hockey player at Assumption.

No doubt, Montessi will juggle the varied roles she sees ahead of her – as an HR executive at Sony Pictures, with her husband and family, and as a competitive athlete – with the same determination, vision and talent that have brought her success behind the scenes at one of the world’s most recognized brands.