

# LATINO PRIDE RUNS DEEP

## City woman to be named mayor for day just like dad

BY DESTINY LOPEZ  
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

WATERBURY — Maritza Acosta-Gay can remember May 5, 1987, perfectly.

It was the day her father, Adalberto "Tutin" Acosta, was named Waterbury's first Hispanic Mayor for a Day.

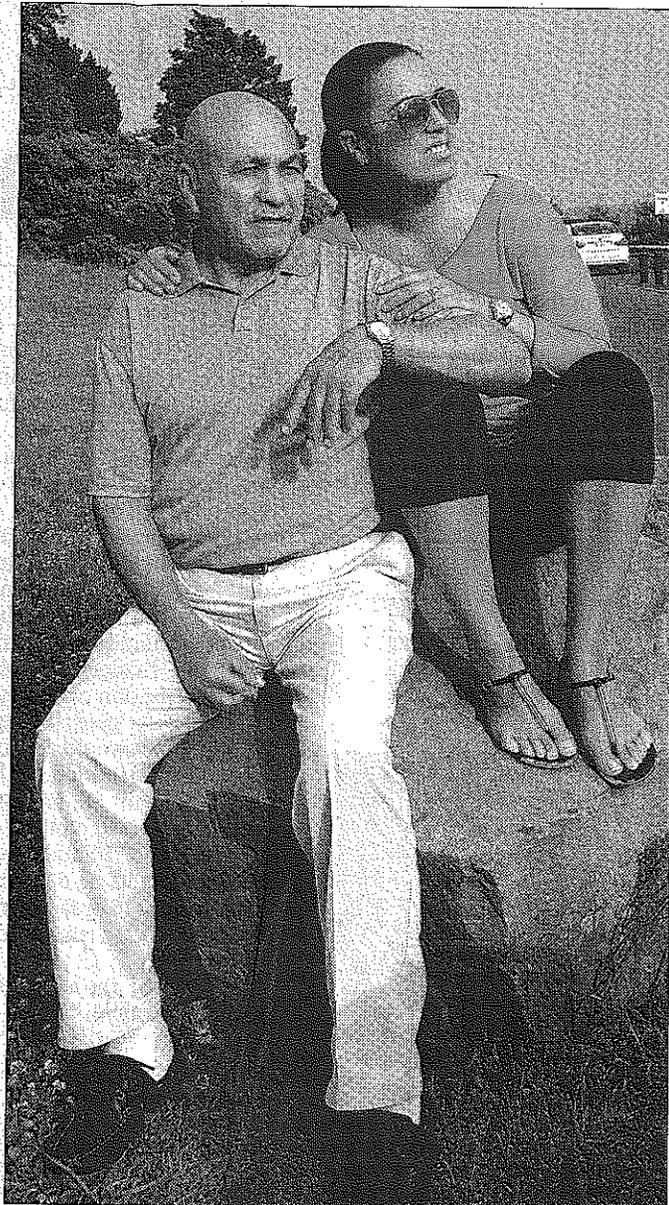
"I remember they gave him this key and all I could think was my dad has the key to the city, my dad is the mayor for a day," said Acosta-Gay.

Twenty-seven years later, Acosta-Gay will follow her father's footsteps when she is honored as Waterbury's 2014 Puerto Rican Mayor for the Day on Friday at City Hall's annual Puerto Rican flag-raising ceremony. "I'm so grateful I'm going to be able to share this day with him," she said of receiving the honor with her father watching.

Acosta-Gay was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Waterbury when she was 5 years old. From a young age, her parents instilled the sense of community in her. "They always taught us to give back," she said.

After receiving her bachelor's and master's degrees from Southern Connecticut State University, and a master of social work from the University of Connecticut, she had a strong desire to go back to the city she called home for most of her life, Acosta-Gay said.

Acosta-Gay began working as a social worker for the state Department of Children and Families in Waterbury. After receiving a promotion



CONTRIBUTED  
**Maritza Acosta-Gay, this year's Waterbury Puerto Rican Mayor for the Day, with her father, Adalberto Acosta. Mr. Acosta was Waterbury's first Hispanic Mayor for a Day in 1987.**

that transferred her career to New Britain, she joined Waterbury's Hispanic Coalition to remain involved with the city's Latino community.

She is now back in Waterbury as DCF's program manager and also teaches at Central Connecticut State University.

As the new president and

former vice president of the coalition, Acosta-Gay has worked to address the needs of Waterbury's Hispanic community by helping residents apply for citizenship, complete income tax forms, participate in case management and gain computer skills through tutoring programs.

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VICTOR LOPEZ  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
THE HISPANIC COALITION

La Casa Bienvenida, a senior center that serves low-income Hispanic elders of the community, merged with the coalition in 2012. Acosta-Gay is most excited to see the seniors who are being transported to the flag-raising ceremony. "Seeing them there is going to make my day," she said.

"We as Latinos and we as Puerto Ricans, it's a big day for us. We get to see one individual that represents us," said Victor Lopez, executive director of the Hispanic Coalition. "We want someone who has stayed in our community; somebody who the community itself is proud of and that's when we came up with Maritza."

Acosta-Gay will be honored at 10 a.m. at City Hall. A luncheon featuring traditional Puerto Rican food and dance will be held after the flag raising. Pledges will be collected to help purchase another van for the seniors of La Casa Bienvenida.