

## GENERAL SERVICES

## From Piper Tech to The Land of Oz

Mandy Gonzalez, daughter of Club Member Paul Gonzalez, General Services, is the toast of Broadway in *Wicked*.

Club Members might want to pay attention to the performers at the City's Christmas parties. One might just grow up to win awards and electrify the Broadway stage in New York.

At a General Services Christmas party at Piper Tech in the early 1990s, Paul Gonzalez, Warehouse Worker, General Services, brought his young daughter, Mandy, in to sing selections from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, accompanied by a karaoke machine.

That very same Mandy Gonzalez is now one of Broadway's brightest lights, having starred in five Broadway musicals, including the groundbreaking *In the Heights*. Before that, she won an Obie Award for *Eli's Coming*, her first performance Off-Broadway. Currently you can catch her playing Elphaba in the wickedly popular *Wicked*.

"I remember him waking up before dawn and kissing me goodbye while I was still half asleep," Mandy said from New York of her memories growing up in a City Employee household. "When we had a day off from school, we would go and meet him for lunch, and he would take us downtown. Every time we would drive by his work on the weekends, he would always point out the helicopters that were landing on top of the building. I remember thinking how amazing that was.

"And then, when I was older, I would drive out to pick my dad up for lunch by myself, and he would introduce me to all of his friends. He would show me around the buildings and tell me where all the different departments for the City were located. I would see all of the different City supplies and the old banged-up police cars. I was always proud to be at the place where my dad worked."



Mandy and her dad, Paul Gonzalez, General Services, Club Member.

Her appreciation of a City career wasn't all she got from Paul – she also got his musical ability.

"Yeah, I guess I was [musical] back in the '60s!" Paul says, laughing at the memory.

"People don't know this, but my dad has a beautiful singing voice," Mandy says. "He had a band in high school called The Enchantments, so my singing definitely comes from him. I remember when I first heard him sing. He really is an amazing talent.

"There wasn't a day that there wasn't music playing in my house," she continues. "I loved it. My dad loves the oldies. My mom was a huge Beatles fan, and my grandma loved old-fashioned musicals, so I had a wide assortment to be inspired by."

Paul and Robin Gonzalez could see pretty early on that they had something special in Mandy.



Mandy Gonzalez took over the role of Elphaba in *Wicked* March 23.

"Robin and I used to see her performances all the time when she was growing up," Paul says. "Mandy could pick up the dances and songs really easily. She could remember all the lines. It came natural to her.

"She was in *South Pacific* and *The Sound of Music* at Saugus High School. I've seen her shows on Broadway, and I'm going in a few weeks to see her in *Wicked*," Paul says.

Mandy credits her success to the dedication of her family.

"My dad has been so encouraging of me," Mandy says. "He has always encouraged me to follow my dreams and to find my own sense of happiness. He would drive me to my many lessons, auditions and shows. I would always see my dad standing in the back, smiling and tapping his head along to music. Whenever I see my dad at the end of a show, he is always smiling and proud."

"We are very proud of her," Paul says. "The only bad thing is that she's so far away."

Mandy feels the same about her dad's City career.

"I am extremely proud of my father for his City career," Mandy says. "I can't believe he has been there for 22 years! He is such a hard worker, and he makes me proud every day."



The Gonzalez family, from left: Mom, Robin; Mandy; and dad, Paul.



Mandy Gonzalez stands in front of the poster advertising *In the Heights*, in which she was part of the original cast.



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