Aurora Abella-Austriaco, founder and principal, Austriaco & Associates Ltd., Chicago, was installed as the 136th president of The Chicago Bar Association (CBA) on June 21, 2012. The CBA has over 22,000 lawyer members and is the largest metropolitan bar association in the country. Ms. Austriaco is the first Asian American President in CBA’s history. She will serve a one-year term.

Austriaco & Associates is a ChicagoMSDC certified MBE with offices upstairs from ours in the Clark Adams building at 105 W. Adams. The practice concentrates in the areas of commercial and real estate litigation, construction litigation, mechanic’s liens, defense of mortgage foreclosure, mortgage fraud, title insurance claims and other special chancery remedy cases.

Before forming her own firm in 2009, Ms. Austriaco spent five years with a small boutique firm, worked for Harold Levine, Ltd. for four years, and served as Corporate Counsel and Managing Attorney for the Indiana operations for Attorney’s Title Guaranty Fund, Inc. for 10 years. She graduated from DePaul University with a B.S. in Finance ('87) and a J.D. ('90).

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Members and visitors to 1871 have unprecedented access to resources, industry legends, and venture capitalists. The loft-style space with its glass walls and open conference areas encourages collaboration and relationship building. There is a generous, cooperative spirit in this young, enthusiastic crowd where investors mix with business school professors and entrepreneurs.

Venture Capital firms, I2A Fund, New World Ventures and Sandbox Industries are amongst the partner organizations with space at 1871 as is Excelerate Labs, Chicago’s leading incubator which admits about 10 startups annually and puts them through a three-month boot camp concluding with a Demo Day, when each company pitches to about 500 potential investors.

Illinois Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, The University of Chicago, and The University of Illinois are partners.

Amongst the Members are businesses like KBOOM! a creator of custom brand-centric games and applications; Marketaero, an online marketplace for AOG (aircraft on ground) parts; and A Better Chicago, a non-profit organization providing funding and management support to a portfolio of high-performing non-profit organizations that advance opportunities for low-income populations in the region.

Partner and Member company, Code Academy is an 11-week program that teaches people how to develop and design web applications. African American founders, Mike McGee and Neal Sales-Griffin, met at Northwestern University where they were each student body presidents of their respective classes. Upon graduation in 2009, Sales-Griffin took a position at Sandbox Industries. He left a year later to learn coding and start his own company. McGee joined him shortly after he graduated in 2010.

In July 2011, Sales-Griffin and McGee won SPARK Chicago, a start-up competition, and used the opportunity to recruit six of the other contestants to join the Code Academy team and to form a partnership with Pathfinder Software whose offices they shared as they developed their business. They later leased space from Groupon to hold their first class and at the John Hancock Center to accommodate their growing enrollment before settling into their new home at 1871.

Promoted chiefly on Twitter, the two capitalized on their influential networks to create buzz about the business and recruit staff and students. Enrollment is booming and each class culminates with a Demo Day when graduates have five minutes to present the apps they built to hundreds of guests.

About a year ago, Code Academy was just an idea, but with hard work, perseverance, and wizard networking, today, they employ 14 staff members including 4 instructors and have graduated hundreds of students from across the world. McGee, feels fortunate to have the benefit of the growing startup community at 1871 which he sees as the embodiment of what Chicago should be, “a supportive environment for young entrepreneurs who otherwise would have been running their businesses out of coffee shops or their garages.”