

# the Blueprint

ARIA GROUP ARCHITECTURE + design

It's all in  
the details.

Paying close attention  
to the little things that  
elevate a project from  
*good to great.*

## FEATURES

*STK Steakhouse*  
*Higgins Road Site Development*  
*Crust Brewing*  
*Tortazo*  
*Higgins Row*  
*Topgolf's New Hybrid Concept*  
*Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse*  
*Cooper's Hawk*  
*MSI Chicago's Food Court Renovation*

BONUS *Ditka's Restaurant Refresh*

## PLUS

*Our Social Purpose*  
*and*  
*Announcing Big Changes at*  
*Aria Group*

# Highlights of 2022

What an exciting time for Aria Group! We've enjoyed tremendous growth, named a new executive team, completed a staggering amount of work and maybe even had a little bit of fun along the way. We all want to thank Jim, Joe, Walter and Thomas as they transition to retirement and celebrate the company that they built together. There are not many firms our size out there, and building it from Jim's living room to over 125 employees today is an amazing accomplishment. Building an organization that can be passed to a next generation, even more so. It's all in service to being a trusted partner to our clients. We will continue to be the firm you send your toughest projects to. The "whatever it takes" mindset is still part of our culture and will be for generations to comew. -Chris Hamer, President

**on the cover:**  
Custom brass sliding gate detail at Museum of Science and Industry Chicago, IL.  
Photo by Daniel Kelleghan



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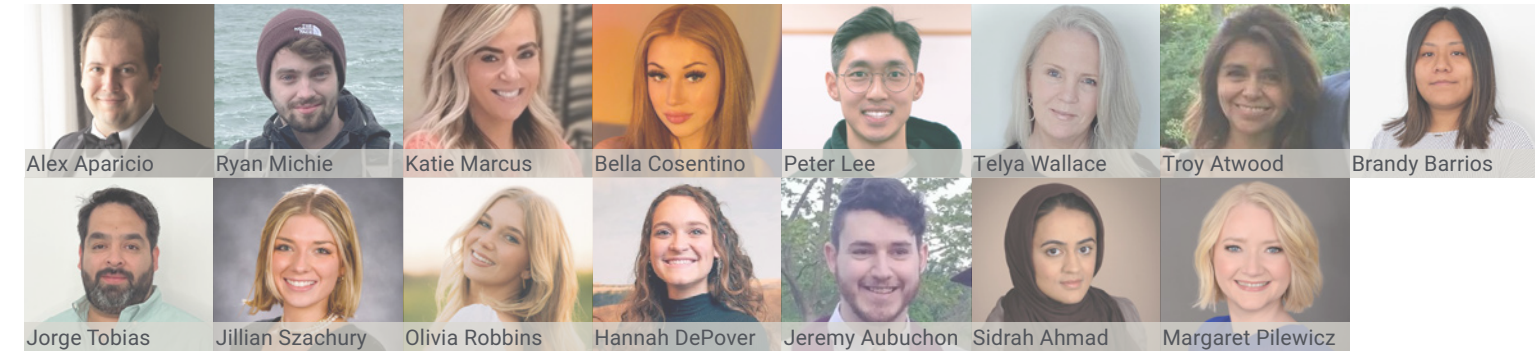
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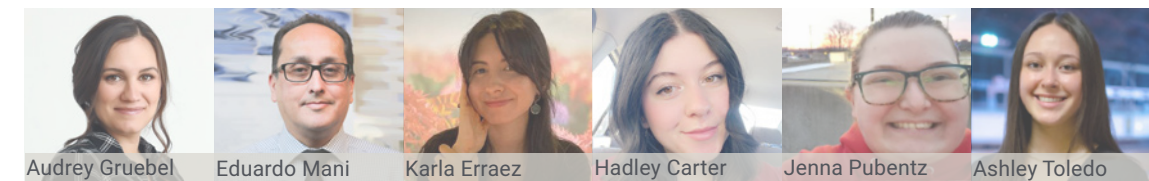
# Personals

## New Hires in 2022



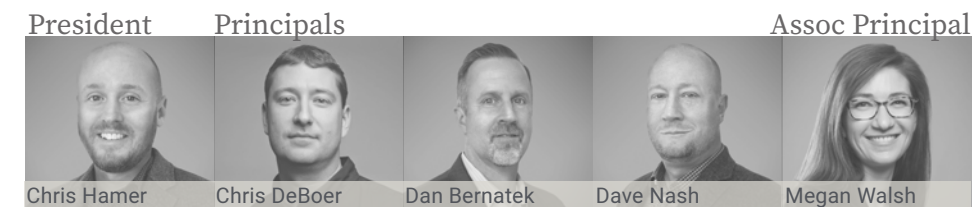
## Familiar Faces

## Interns



## Congratulations are in order

### Promotions



### Senior Associate

### Associate



### IT Manager

### Project Designer

### Project Coordinator

### Senior Designer



### Engagements/Weddings



Adam Tregoning engaged in April  
Erinn Lyons engaged in May  
Emma Phillips engaged in June  
Olga Ratajski engaged in November  
Josh Curvey married in October

### New Arrivals



Shannon Sterne baby Harper 2/2/22  
Kyle Miller baby Emersyn 9/6/22  
Liliana Borchers baby Elena 11/25/22

### Licensures



Erika Berg, NCIDQ  
Yaskira Camacho, NCIDQ  
Sonia Miranda Monroy, SHRM-CP  
Lukasz Dakowicz, AIA

# Crust Brewing

Rosemont, IL • Opened April 2022



The design of new concept Crust Brewing focuses on the blending of elements to

create an environment that is dynamic and inviting. We were inspired by the client's appreciation of tradition. To honor their passion, we incorporated salvaged and revitalized existing elements from the site including the original millwork & upcycled furniture. This provided the perfect backdrop for the classically tiled, Italian wood-burning ovens. A counter-style dining experience highlights the pizza making process accompanied by a dough prep room encased in glass to exhibit how the craft begins. Curvilinear ceiling & lighting elements add a softness that

balances the original stainless steel beer kettles that were cleaned, polished and reinstated for use within the space. Across the way, steel trim separates rustic brick from venetian plaster in an arched detail tying in an existing barrel vault above. Tailored upholsteries and muted olive accents add a richness to the palette and ensure the space feels enlivened and approachable. Our final touches to the space included oversized warehouse-style doors, stone countertops, hand painted murals, rustic brickwork, and an elegant lighting package with vintage lamping.

—Kristin Mrozinski, Project Manager



Seats 437  
Square Footage 15,283 with patio  
Photographer Daniel Kelleghan



**Project Team** Hunter McCalla, Senior Interior Designer • Kyle Miller, Project Coordinator • Joe Junius, Project Designer • Kristin Mrozinski, Project Manager Frank Cavanaugh, Principal



# Rick Bayless Tortazo

Times Square, New York City, NY • Opened January 2023  
 NoMad, New York City, NY • Remodel Debut November 2022



Our partnership with Chicago celebrity chef Rick Bayless continues as we took on two Tortazo locations in New York City this year. One is a brand new location in the heart of Times Square and the other is a renovation to the existing location in NoMad. In both spaces, we took a playful approach to the marriage Mexican culture and New York grit. In the reimagination of the NoMad location, we made sure elements of the existing space were still

celebrated, like the detailed trim work on the ceilings and the centralized main focus of the bar. At Times Square, we kept the existing raw concrete floors as well as the exposed brick walls to juxtapose the youthfulness of the bright neon signs and murals we incorporated into the space. Both locations feature large murals which were created by NYC Mexican-American street artist Marka27. The life and energy the brightly colored murals bring to the space is balanced by natural woven elements and textural gray plaster. *—Erika Berg, Senior Interior Designer*



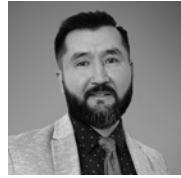
**Project Team** Erika Berg, Senior Interior Designer • Karla Erraez, Interior Designer • Erinn Lyons, Interior Designer • Pooja Bethur, Architectural Designer • Megan Walsh, Project Designer • Sean Irish, Project Manager • Chris Hamer, Principal • Walter Pancewicz, Principal

**Times Square**  
**Seats** 55  
**Square Footage** 3,156  
**Contractor** GBC  
**Photographer** Daniel Kellegghan

**NoMad Remodel**  
**Seats** 55  
**Square Footage** 3,862  
**Contractor** GBC  
**Photographer** Daniel Kellegghan

# STK Steakhouse

Charlotte, NC • Opening June 2023



This is the first of several locations that Aria designed in a new and growing partnership with The ONE Group, parent company for STK Steakhouse. The owner's vision is to redefine and elevate your typical "grandfather's steakhouse" by introducing a new fine dining experience to a younger and trend-setting audience. The concept design introduces modern materials, bold color accents, exciting artwork, and dynamic accent lighting to create a club-like atmosphere. An energetic bar area is adjacent to a formal dining area which features softer materials and seating elements for a more intimate experience. The semi-circular main bar takes center stage within the restaurant, with an unmistakable and brand-defining two story backbar feature wall. The entirety of the restaurant is tied together by STK's most identifiable element, the freeform undulating ribbons. These ribbons organically ebb and flow throughout the space, tying the mezzanine to the main level. The ribbons also define the lobby entry façade, and spill out to the

exterior patio. It was a monumental challenge for the project team to make the ribbons that were beautifully imagined in the schematic design renderings come to life with real building product solutions, while still meeting the owner's project budget. We hope that upon completion this site will bring a lot of excitement to the Charlotte area for years to come.

-Ilias Saoukbaev, Project Manager



**Seats** 348

**Square Footage** 9,272 interior + 5,256 patio

**Renderings by** Flor Hernandez



**Project Team** Flor Hernandez, Architectural Designer • Jen Ambrose, Project Designer • Ilias Saoukbaev, Project Manager • Joe Vajda, Principal



# MSI Chicago Museum Kitchen

Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago, IL • Opened December 2022

While the exhibits in the museum are the main attraction, the Museum Kitchen is an essential amenity supporting the guest experience. The Aria team revitalized the space using classic but modern art deco design elements that pay homage to the year this space was opened. A sliding brass gate adorns the main entry to the food vending area while terrazzo blankets the floors and carries throughout the dining spaces. The North Dining area incorporates a floating cloud ceiling element to soften the space, and features a "Curiosity Cabinet" planned to showcase unique artifacts and carry the museum into the dining experience. The South Dining area is comprised of two separate rooms that mimic each other in design,

creating cozy dining spaces with soft curves and overarching soffits. Terrazzo creeps up the walls in high traffic areas for maximum durability while the walls and floors in other areas are clad in large format porcelain tiles. Wood tones, brass trim, and lighting elements breathe personality into this elevated, classic space. Fun fact: The letters M-S-I are hidden in within the design of the entry gates. Can you find them?!

-Guillermo Gomez, Project Coordinator

**Seats** 416 **Square Footage** 18,536 **Contractor** 41 North Contractors  
**Photographer** Daniel Kelleghan



**Project Team** Ryan Pubentz, Architectural Designer • Sana Ahmad, Senior Designer • Guillermo Gomez, Project Coordinator • Neal Thompson, Project Manager • Thomas Smiciklas, Principal

# Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse

Pittsburgh, PA • Opened October 2022

This project was the exciting start of a new client relationship with Landry's! Our task was to house a new Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse location within the historic confines of the early 20th century Union Trust Building in downtown Pittsburgh, and to integrate the design seamlessly into the cityscape surrounding it. With a heartfelt nod to the Steel City, this Double Eagle location features

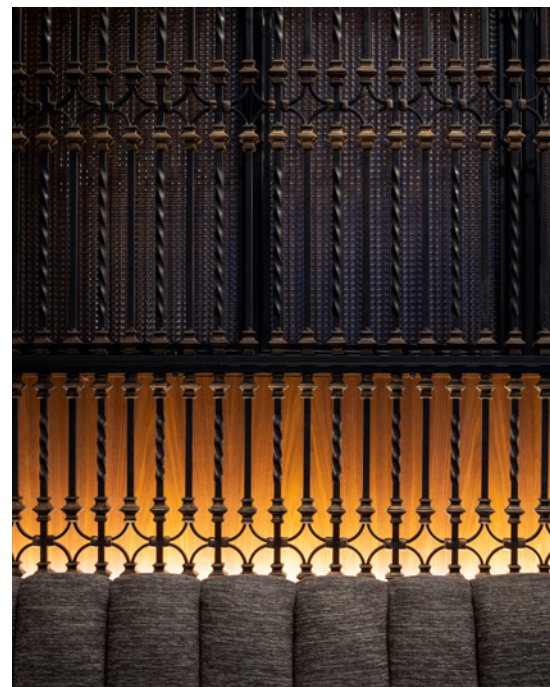
multiple steel 'archways' representative of the numerous bridges found throughout Pittsburgh. Ornamental metalwork, dazzling chandeliers, intricate woodwork and heavily patinaed materials pay homage to the craftsmanship and hard work that go into this community. We



worked with Landry's to help realize their vision for the continuation of this brand and crafted a space rich in texture, warmth, adornment and monumentality. Matchbook granite slabs sit proudly behind a stone and metal host stand, while travertine walls relate to the existing stonework throughout the Union Trust Building. Flooring across the main levels is accentuated with various stone mosaics, ornamental patterned tiles, and intricate edge banding. Open ceilings throughout speak to the city's industrial roots, and ceiling clouds of oxidized metal and hand painted tin tiles hide ductwork while providing a truly unique detail.

—Elizabeth Neuffer, Project Designer

**Seats** 284  
**Square Footage** 9,946  
**Contractor** A. Martini  
**Photos by** Landry's



**Project Team** Hunter McCalla, Interior Designer • Kyle Miller, Architectural Designer • Matthew Shoener, Project Manager • Elizabeth Neuffer, Project Designer  
Dave Nash, Principal • Walter Pancewicz, Principal



Site Area 120,565 Contractor Northern Builders Renderings by Travis Vannoy & Frank Cavanaugh



**Project Team** Adrian Chavez, Architectural Designer • Yaskira Camacho, Senior Interior Designer (Stan's Donuts) • Catie Crutchfield, Interior Designer (Small Cheval) • Travis Vannoy, Project Coordinator • Matthew Clarke, Project Manager • Frank Cavanaugh, Principal

## Higgins Row Site Development

Rosemont, IL • Opening 2023



The Higgins Row development presents modern solutions to post-pandemic dining culture. Within the site, three new restaurants all featuring drive-thru service are taking shape. Aria's work on this project included overall site planning and design, building shell design of all structures, and full service interior build-out design of Small Cheval and Stan's Donuts. To make room for the development, an underutilized parking garage and restaurant were demolished by Rosemont. Key design goals included store visibility from Higgins road, efficient parking distribution, and traffic flow throughout the site. The building designs rely heavily

on functionality, contemporary detailing, and providing a framework for each concept's brand identity. The Village of Rosemont has brought together three highly regarded and complementary F&B concepts for the site. One building contains two tenants; Stan's Donuts & Coffee and Shaquille O'Neal's Big Chicken concept. The second building is Hogsalt's first ground-up Small Cheval that features an operable skylight over the dining area. In addition, a substantial drive-thru function was designed that includes overhead canopies to shelter team members and guests in inclement weather. —Travis Vannoy, Project Coordinator

# Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurant

Gurnee, IL • Opened November 2022



The latest location of Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurant to open is located in Gurnee, Illinois. One focus for this location was to include a value-driven design and maintain the Cooper's Hawk elevated identity. The city of Gurnee did not have any specific exterior design requirements, which helped aid in keeping cost down. Through the use of Nichiha and EIFs paneling on the exterior, paired with a more simplified patio we were able to achieve a cost-effective design and still uphold a strong sense of the Cooper's Hawk brand. On the interior, the design was based on warm rich tones and an industrial winery style. Still keeping cost in mind, we created a scaled-back ceiling design with simplified features throughout the space. However, through the use of unique and modern lighting fixtures and bold finishes, you would hardly know it was value engineered design. —James Gallagher, Project Coordinator



**Project Team** Annalise Zorn, Architectural Designer • Eli Silva, Architectural Designer • Emma Phillips, Interior Designer • Stacey Bouwman, Senior Interior Designer • Elizabeth Kozlik, Project Designer • James Gallagher, Project Coordinator • Dan Bernatek, Project Manager • Joe Vajda, Principal



Seats 261 Square Footage 10,600 Contractor ICI Photographer Ballog Photography

# Topgolf Hybrid

Boise, ID • Opened November 2022

Over the years, the Aria team has collaborated with Topgolf to develop four unique prototypes to serve different markets. This fifth prototype features the most efficient conditioned building while infusing the brand's classic identity with vibrant, energetic design elements and graphics. Players can experience a view down into the two-story bar space from the upper level teeline, or a fun overlook balcony view. Overhead doors open from the two-story bar space out to covered patio dining to expand on Topgolf's already successful indoor / outdoor experiences. The covered patio can be enjoyed year-round with fans, infrared heaters, and the ability to be fully enclosed during colder months. String lights extend out from the covered patio structure across an open

patio space with lawn games, fire pits and lounge seats for maximum outdoor fun. This is a 60 hitting bay venue with eight Luxe Suites that can be fully enclosed and conditioned for private events or open for a private hitting experience. The Ground Level Luxe Suites are open to the adjacent VIP Patio and 9-hole mini golf course that links players back to the main building through more outdoor patio space. The jewel of this concept is an exterior stair at the center of the teeline clad in site-specific graphic planks creating a unique view to the outfield. —Andrew Leung, Project Coordinator



**Project Team** Sara Armeanu, Interior Designer • David Li, Architectural Designer • Alex Rosado, Architectural Designer • Olga Ratajski, Senior Designer • Quang Ngyuen, Project Coordinator • Guillermo Gomez, Project Coordinator • Lilian Reyes-Brahar, Project Coordinator • Andrew Leung, Project Coordinator • Elizabeth Plecha, Project Designer • Damian Satola, Project Manager • Thomas Smiciklas, Principal

**Bays** 60  
**Seats** 568  
**Square Footage** 33,327  
**Contractor** ARCO/Murray Construction  
**Graphics** Cima Network  
**Lighting** Villa Lighting  
**Photographer** Michael Baxter



# Ditka's

Oak Brook, IL • Remodel Debut October 2021



As the original designers of this restaurant back in 2007, Aria Group was tasked with renovating the main dining room and giving it a fresh new feel. By redesigning this space with a mixture of U-booths and Pullman booths, the once open room filled with loose tables is hardly recognizable. Working off of the existing ceiling feature and lighting that was to remain, we played up the mid-century modern style and brought it to a new level. Newly painted tone-on-

tone chevron trims were added to the walls to highlight the new booth design and lighting feature. A custom slatted window screen feature was designed to soften the light that floods in from the adjacent atrium space. Frosted glass table lamps were placed at the tabletops to bring some ambient lighting down to the table level and highlight the custom features throughout the space. The renovation of this room spilled out to the rest of the restaurant in various finish and furniture updates and has truly warmed the restaurant and given it a new life.

—Emma Phillips, Interior Designer



**Project Team** Emma Phillips, Interior Designer • Elizabeth Kozlik, Project Designer • Dan Bernatek, Project Manager • Joe Vajda, Principal



**Seats** 271  
**Square Footage** 11,561  
**Contractor** Scott General Contracting Co.  
**Photographer** Leslie Eve Photography

# On the Boards + Opened Up

Shake Shack



Rosedale, CA • Opened November 2022

Small Cheval



Rosemont, IL • Opening Spring 2023

Alter Brewing



Oakbrook, IL • Opened December 2022



Charlotte, NC • Coming Soon

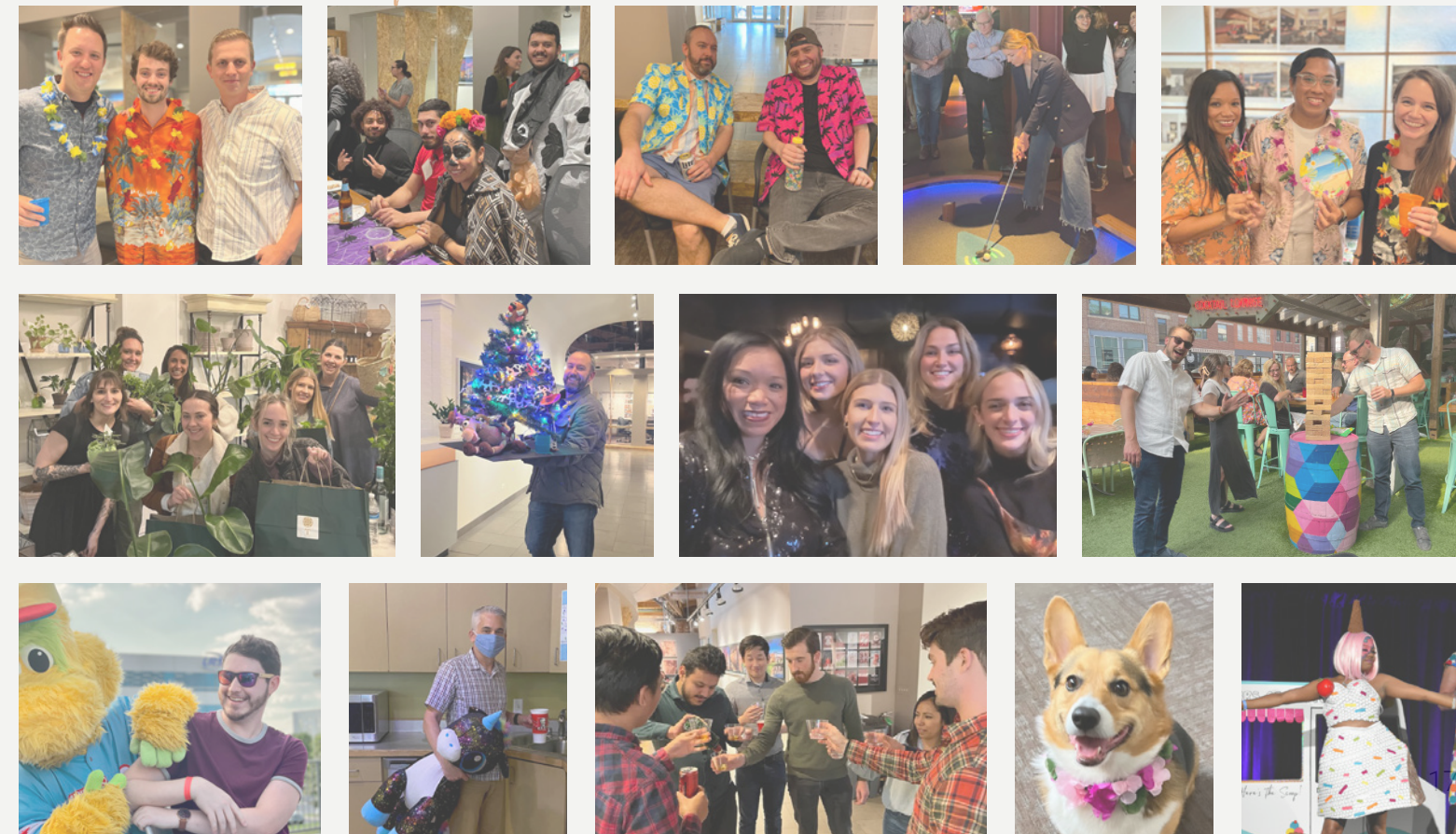


Columbus, OH • Coming Soon



Austin, TX • Coming Soon

## Fun with Aria Group



# Social Purpose

# Thank You, Jim, Walt, Joe, & Tommy

## Design for All

Aria Group's Social Purpose is driven by our people. Our network expands to include our team, our clients, our collaborators, our communities — and all the individuals that experience the spaces we create. Life brings us all together, and we at Aria Group use our skills, time and passion to bring design to all. We believe that by working together we can be better individuals, families and communities. Alongside our partners, we strive to build a just, equitable, and diverse future. We strive to give back and use our talents and experience to support our community.

## Offer Something Tangible

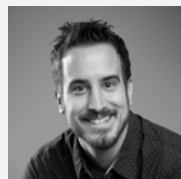
Aria Group provides a Volunteer Time Off day to all employees. We encourage our team to devote time to be "hands on" with community partners. Our volunteer days have ranged from assisting nonprofit organizations, renderings and drawings for potential community projects, to helping teachers prepare their classrooms for the year. The annual day allows a wonderful opportunity to dedicate time and creativity while supporting the communities where we live and work.

## Collaborate towards Empowerment

Aria Group is proud that our team strives to connect with many different community stakeholders. We cherish our partnerships and love working collaboratively to create everything from design ideas to built projects. See below for a selection of our community partners.

## 16th Street Kitchen - A Socially Responsible Project

Over the past five years, Aria Group has been working with the Street Vendors Association of Chicago to provide their vendors a location to both prepare food and be a community meeting space. While the initial kitchen space should open this summer, the community organization's dream to expand and serve the neighborhood is ongoing. We are excited to be working with them as they expand their footprint in North Lawndale. This expansion will include a restaurant, kitchen expansion, bodega and rooftop greenhouse allowing the vendors to continue to serve their community in a variety of ways.



—Joe Junius, Senior Associate



After 34 successful years of Aria Group, founders Jim Lencioni, Walter Pancewicz, Joe Vajda, and partner Thomas Smiciklas have stepped back to transition into retirement. We asked Aria Group to recount some favorite memories and share words for them.

I once worked at a firm that was the anti-Aria. When I started here, the culture really resonated with me. Do a good job, keep clients happy, instill quality in all aspects. It seems simple, but I think many firms don't get this. Most importantly, Jim, Walt, Joe & Tommy have always taken their responsibilities as an employer seriously. These are the things we all need to keep going. Hopefully you feel it. If you don't, come talk to me. Let's work on it.

*Chris Hamer*

IN 1995, THE GUYS INVITED ME TO THE ARIA CHRISTMAS PARTY AT BARB CITY AFTER WE MET TO DISCUSS A POSITION IN THEIR FIRM. I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH THEIR KINDNESS AND FUN LOVING SPIRIT. SO I DECIDED TO MAKE THE MOVE TO ARIA. AFTER A SHORT TIME WORKING TOGETHER, I LEARNED WHAT CREATIVE, KNOWLEDGEABLE AND COMPASSIONATE ARCHITECTS THEY ARE. IT WAS THEN THAT I DECIDED TO SPEND THE REST OF MY CAREER WITH THEM IF THEY WOULD HAVE ME. TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS LATER I'M CONVINCED IT WAS THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE. THEIR GUIDANCE AND FRIENDSHIP HAVE BEEN A BLESSING.

*Frank Caranagh*



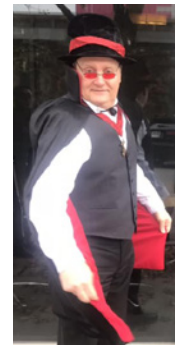
Sam Pancewicz found this photo of her dad Walt that she took in the old Aria office

These four are truly LEGENDARY!  
 Jim - Social Butterfly - Jim loves our Aria parties & I love doing events for the pure joy on his face!  
 Walt - True Wine Connoisseur - I hated wine before I met Walt lol & The "World" Traveler, Walt has motivated me to explore all the cool places he's traveled to!  
 Joe - Mr. Go To! - He literally is a problem solver in any matter, I have learned more about plumbing & repairs than school! Ha!  
 Tommy - Mr. GQ - when he is not out traveling some exotic places, he always looks "extra" stylish!  
 All are so different and have taught me so much and I will miss them all!

*Mary Jane Soria*

Thank you, Thomas, for always being yourself. I remember when you first stopped by my desk when I started, you asked me if I had a nickname. Then I told you a story about when my brother-in-law called me *Matrix*. Well that stuck haha! I'd see you in the kitchen area or early in the morning, "what's up *Matrix*", "How's it going *Matrix*", "*MATRIX!*". You made me feel welcome and showed me how meaningful and important small interactions with you and your boss are. I congratulate all of you on a job well done.

*Nathan Kiecker*



Kristin Mrozinski recalls filling Walt's office with balloons for his 60th birthday

I WILL ALWAYS APPRECIATE BEING GIVEN THE CHANCE TO GROW AS AN ARCHITECT AND AN INDIVIDUAL WITH JIM AND FRANK.

*Matt Clarke*



Kendra Crawford submitted a favorite photo of Joe from Punta Cana

It's hard to think of something that I haven't learned from these guys. Having been around for quite a few years now, I would say I learned how to be an Architect/Leader/Friend/Entrepreneur. Best of luck!

*Anonymous*

A couple years ago, I shaved my head to raise money for brain cancer research. Jim came over to my desk and talked to me about it, told me how courageous I was, and personally handwrote me a donation. I will always remember that moment. I think that's a very rare kind of person to find as the president of a company - someone who cares about your life, not just your work.

*Catie Critchfield*

Joe has always led our studio with compassion and genuine care for the success of our projects and team members. He is always available to step in and provide guidance or help in any way that is needed. Also, I once won a bet for \$5 about balloon framing, so that's a memory that makes me smile.

*Lis Battle*

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY GREAT MEMORIES WITH THESE FOUR THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. FROM JIM JUMPING INTO THE POOL FULLY CLOTHED IN OUR FIRST OFFICE TRIP TO PUERTO VALLARTA, TO MANY GLASSES OF WINE AND JOURNEYS WITH WALT, TO MY TRIPS WITH JOE IN DALLAS BBQ WORLD AND BURGERS & BEER IN MIAMI, TO TOPGOLF ADVENTURES IN NASHVILLE AND MYRTLE BEACH WITH TOMMY - THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE SPECIAL MOMENTS SHARED WITH EACH OF THEM THAT I'LL CHERISH. SINCE THE MOMENT I STEPPED INTO THE DOOR MANY, MANY YEARS AGO, THEY EACH HAVE MADE ME FEEL WELCOME AND PART OF THE ARIA FAMILY. THEY HAVE BEEN GREAT ROLE MODELS, MENTORS, AND LEADERS. CHEERS GENTLEMEN YOU'VE DEFINITELY MADE YOUR MARK, AND I'M VERY THANKFUL TO HAVE WORKED WITH YOU ALL.

*Brian Zielinski*



THE FIRST DAY I STARTED AT ARIA BACK IN 2016, JIM CAME OVER TO SAY HI AND INTRODUCE HIMSELF, AND I (NOT REALIZING WHO I WAS TALKING TO) ASKED HIM WHO'S STUDIO HE WORKS IN (INSERT FACEPALM). JIM JUST LAUGHED AND HUMBLY SAID HE'S THE BIG GUY AROUND HERE LOL. I STILL VIVIDLY REMEMBER MY EMBARRASSMENT AT NOT REALIZING WHO HE WAS, BUT JIM'S GENUINE KINDNESS AND FRIENDLINESS WAS SUCH A NICE START TO MY CAREER HERE. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GREAT BOSS AND HAS MADE ARIA AN AMAZING PLACE TO WORK AT!

*Sara Ahmad*

At this year's holiday party, I introduced my fiancé to Jim and he hit him with the "if you hurt Emma I will hurt you" spiel! It was hilarious but also really touching.

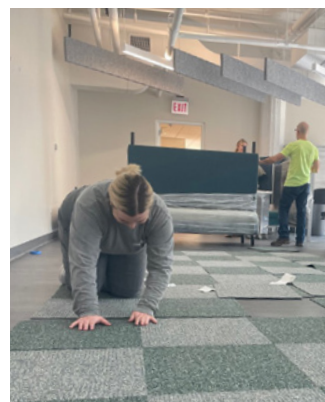
*Emma Phillips*

## VTO Day

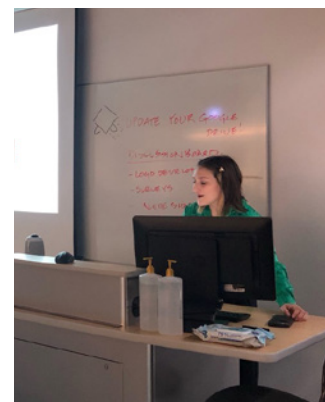
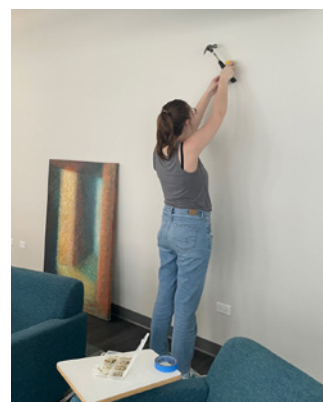
Last year, Aria Group introduced a new perk for employees: Volunteer Time Off (VTO). Each employee is given 8 paid hours each year to spend volunteering!



Sonia volunteered at Sarah's Inn, sorting and taking inventory of school supply donations



Working with Designs for Dignity and Mercy Housing, Jordyn & Erinn spent the day helping convert an empty space in an existing affordable housing building into a multi-function community space



Catie gave a presentation on restaurant design to a class of students at College of DuPage



Illustration by Will Olds

**Aria Group** 830 North Blvd Oak Park, IL 60301



**Board of Directors** Jim Lencioni, Walter Panowicz, Joe Vajda, Frank Cavanaugh



**Principal, Board of Directors**  
Thomas Smicklas

**Principal, Chief Financial Officer**  
Christopher DeBoer

**President**  
Chris Hamer

**Principal, Chief Human Resources Officer**  
Dan Bernatek

**Principal, Chief Operating Officer**  
Dave Nash

**Associate Principal, Chief Business Development Officer**  
Megan Walsh



**Senior Associates** Matt Clarke, Elisabeth Battle, Joe Junius, Neal Thompson



**Associates** Brian Zielinski, Kristin Mrozinski, Ilias Saoukbaev, Shannon Sterne