

Twins take parallel path to leadership at Meijer

Growing up in the small town of Piper City, Ill., identical twin brothers Jeff and Josh Kietzman got their first jobs in high school, delivering The Pantagraph, their local newspaper. Jeff was responsible for the north side of town, while Josh delivered the papers to the south side of town. They didn't know it at the time, but this was only the beginning of their parallel career journeys over the next few decades.

After graduating together from Tri-Point High School in Cullom, Ill., Jeff and Josh went on to college, one at the University of Illinois and one at Parkland College, only about four miles apart in Champaign. In college, the twins needed a part-time job, and their sister recommended they apply at Meijer. They both got jobs at the Champaign store – Josh working as a team member in the Stationary and Small Appliance areas, and Jeff in the Furniture and Paint departments. And after college, they continued on, working there together for about eight years.

“We ended up loving Meijer and the people we worked with. We were given leadership opportunities around the same time, and we have progressed along similar paths over the past 27 years,” said Josh.

“One of our first store directors is a big reason for me pursuing my career at Meijer,” said Jeff. “He taught me a lot about the right way to treat people and explained the opportunities for development and growth.”

The brothers both got promoted at the same time from Team Leaders to Lines Leader and even worked together to open the Normal, Ill., store in 2006, as the GM Line Leader and Food Line Leader.

“Thankfully at the time dress code allowed for two different colored polos, so Jeff always wore red and I always wore teal so our customers and team could tell us apart since we are identical,” said Josh. “Many customers still didn't realize we were two different people though, and just thought we were the hardest working person in the store because they would see us working in several different spots in the store while they shopped.”

From there, Josh went on to work at the Urbana and Danville supercenters before returning to Champaign as a store director in 2019. Jeff also worked at Danville and Urbana, then went on to become a store director in Escanaba, Mich., and then Sheboygan, Wis.

Growing up, the Kietzman brothers were huge Chicago sports fans, and loved rooting for the Cubs, Bulls and Bears. When the opportunity to present a [Simply Give](#) check at a Bears/Packers game came up, Jeff asked Josh to go with him, knowing it would mean a lot for them to have the opportunity together since they are both still big fans. Along with a few family members, they got to go on the field and appeared on the Jumbotron presenting the check during the game.

“It was one of the best sports experiences we've ever had, and getting to do it together made it even more special,” said Josh.

When Jeff had the opportunity to open up the new Escanaba store as Store Director in 2017, the region asked for volunteers to help conduct interviews there for a week prior to opening. Although it was one of the most remote stores in the region, Josh jumped at the chance to go help his brother.

Today, Josh serves as store director at the Champaign Meijer, and Jeff is the store director of the Meijer in Sheboygan, Wis, both leading teams of more than 250 team members.

Read on for a Q&A with the brothers about their working relationship and what they like best about working at Meijer:

Q: Are you competitive with each other?

JOSH: Absolutely. Whether we were Line Leaders at different stores in the same market, or now Store Directors in the same region, we have always been competing on important metrics. We always watch each other's

performance, and while we always want to be better than on everything, at the end of the day we want to see each other succeed and it is nice to always have someone to talk to that I trust when I do need help.

JEFF: Every time we get a new report, I look to see how my brother did compared to me, and there have been many times where I have asked my team for their help in “beating my brother’s store.” While it is fun to be competitive, we also lean on each other for tips on how to drive better results. (Side note: Although we both started with Meijer around the same time, I left Meijer for a summer and then came back, which gave Josh more seniority. It still irks me to this day.)

Q: What’s your favorite part about being a store director?

JOSH: The best part is being empowered to take care of our team and our customers. It is also very rewarding to be in a position to help so many along their leadership journeys and see them grow with the company.

JEFF: Definitely the team. Having fun, celebrating successes and watching them grow.

Q: What do you like about working at Meijer?

JOSH: I love that it is still family owned and that our leadership has such strong values that they truly believe and demonstrate. I like that people, both our team and our community, are the priority, and I love that it has given me and family such great opportunities.

JEFF: I love that we are treated like family and there are such strong core values driving the direction of the company.

Additional assets available online:  [Photos](#) ⁽²⁾

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