

## NJSA is Ryan Giertz

As a member of the National Junior Swine Association from its early years of development, Ryan Giertz attended swine shows from coast to coast. Giertz grew up in New Windsor, Illinois, on a diversified livestock and grain farm. Giertz's family runs a commercial sow and finishing operation, raises angus cattle, and grows corn and soybeans. Already a member of 4-H and the Junior Angus Association, Giertz was recruited at his state fair to join NJSA. The next summer he attended his first NJSA event in Louisville, Kentucky.

"It kind of took off, and I got more involved from there," Giertz said.

During his time as a youth member of NJSA, Giertz showed at the National Junior Summer Spectacular, World Pork Expo and various other NJSA shows. He ran for the junior board, was a part of the mentoring program, and helped out in the ring at shows. Giertz gained his most memorable NJSA experience was when he participated in the all-around sweepstakes program. Along with Miles Toenyes, the Fugate family and the Fecke family, Giertz attended all of the shows the first year NJSA offered the program.

"That first year, I think we were the only ones that went to all the shows," Giertz said. "Travelling around to Texas, Pennsylvania, California was just a chance to see the country."

Being involved in NJSA allowed Giertz to meet people from his county, state, region, and country among many other things.

### **What Giertz is Doing**

Giertz is currently working for a construction specialty contractor in Chicago, Illinois. His work involves the construction of public and private work for buildings, highways, and tunnels.

"You name it, we kind of get into it," Giertz said.

Giertz is responsible for estimates and project management. Giertz said the company he works for will generally have one to four projects going on at a time across the Midwest.

“Some days I’m working with clients,” Giertz said. “General contractors will give us invites on projects and I’m estimating our cost, our scope of work and putting together the pricing proposals for our work.”

Giertz said he has worked on projects in Washington, D.C., New York City, Pittsburgh, and he is currently working on a project that plays a small part in the multibillion-dollar Chicago Transit Authority line renovation.

“Our company does geotechnical so that means underground things; foundation mostly,” Giertz said.

Giertz said he feels a sense of completion when a project is finished. He said because the work he does deals with the underground, it can be difficult.

“You can’t see what you’re doing and trying to construct so there’s always a sigh of relief when hours and days of planning come together,” Giertz said.

### **How He Got to Where He is**

Giertz received his undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois in agricultural and biological engineering. He also received his master’s degree in civil engineering from the University of Illinois. After completion of his master’s, Giertz took a job in New Jersey. He moved along the mid-Atlantic before recently settling in Chicago, Illinois.

### **The Role of NJSA in His Success**

Giertz said while the work he is currently doing does not relate to the swine industry or the agricultural industry, he did gain valuable character skills from his involvement in showing pigs and being in NJSA that are beneficial to his career.

“General lessons of hard work and responsibility,” Giertz said, “those kinds of things are the morals that stick with you.”

No matter what sector your job is in, Giertz said, the character skills are what you take with you to a job.

“You take those and just work hard every day; do your best every day,” Giertz said. “That means a lot in a lot of jobs.”

### **The Value of NJSA**

Giertz had the opportunity to travel the country, gain friendships, and learn from others through NJSA. He said the friendships he gained have lasted past his time as a youth member. Giertz also said his experiences in NJSA allowed him to learn how to face competition.

“With the competition, that teaches us how to lose and how to be graceful in defeat,” Giertz said. “From those heartaches, you make some friends probably along the way.”

By watching those around you succeed, Giertz said, you can learn from them by developing relationships with those who are successful. While Giertz said he was not always successful in showing swine, there are other competitions at a NJSA event to participate in.

“There’s just so many different contests and areas for people to excel and just find their own niche of things they’re good at,” Giertz said.

Giertz said he believes it is important for youth to be involved in junior livestock organizations because youth can take the lessons they learn through NJSA and apply them to their future.

“People are successful because of what they do and the lessons they learned out of these organizations,” Giertz said. “They are doing big things now and I think for years to come will do even more.”

## **Become a Member**

If you are interested in the many benefits of being involved in the NJSA, you might consider becoming a member. The NJSA is a youth organization under the NSR for members up to 21 years old. There is no fee for joining the NJSA. After filling out a form found at [www.nationalswine.com/njsa/njsa-membership.php](http://www.nationalswine.com/njsa/njsa-membership.php), you will receive a new members packet and certificate in the mail. As a member, you can exhibit at any National Swine Registry and NJSA sanctioned junior or open show. You are guaranteed a lifetime membership through NJSA after signing up for the first time. For more information about joining the NJSA, visit [www.nationalswine.com](http://www.nationalswine.com) and click on the NJSA tab. You can also receive more information by calling the NSR office at (765)-463-3594.