Slate roofers aim for top with Barkeyville conference

By Michael Roknick
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Joe Jenkins is going to hit the roof next weekend – and he just can't wait for the moment to arrive.

That's because Jenkins is hosting the Slate Roofing Contractors Association of North America Inc.'s annual convention at his Barkeyville home and business. Through his Joseph Jenkins Inc. business, Jenkins has traveled the nation, even the world, to install slate roofs.

He also was among those who helped get the trade association off the ground in 2005. All the time and effort in creating the organization has been worth it, Jenkins said.

"This will be interesting and a lot of fun," Jenkins said of the upcoming event. "You get to meet people who you have gotten to know only by name in the past."

Slate isn't a typical material at residential and commercial building sites.

Professional slate roofing contractors have had little representation in the U.S. roofing trades; 95 percent of all new roofs are made of something other than natural, quarried slate. Like other associations in the construction trade, the SLRCA is developing training programs, instruction materials and creating industry standards for slate construction sites.

Since slate isn't a common material for construction, the annual conference is a good place for others in the construction field to discover its advantages, Jenkins said.

"The conference is a great opportunity to learn some skills and give you exposure to trade secrets," he said.

Held next Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the conference will feature workshops such as German slating, copper soldering, slate siding and standing seam roofing techniques.

In addition to holding an annual conference, the association helps its members and others with sources of both new and salvaged roofing slates and gives out contact names to those in the industry.

Members of the Slate Roofing Contractors Association of North America install a Buckingham slate roof on a picnic shelter for the city of Frankfurt, Ky., at their 2009 annual conference. Next weekend the association is holding its annual conference in Barkeyville.

Other projects for SRCA have included installing free slate roofs for non-profit organizations.

Cost for the conference's registration is $200 for members and $250 for non-members.

Info: 814-786-7015 or 814-786-9085 or slateroofer.org.