

# More Than Talk

BY JENS KIEL



Jens Kiel (left) of Made in Germany met James Swiger of Clarksburg's WYK Associates, Inc. at the 2013 Create West Virginia Conference in Richwood. Kiel now provides creative services and content marketing for Swiger's architectural firm. Kiel will again provide the free Digital Etiquette Workshop on Sunday in Glenville.

**WHEN I WALKED INTO** my first Create West Virginia planning meeting in August, 2013, I was surprised. In that same week, I had just launched my marketing and strategic planning company, Made in Germany. Jeff James invited me to just come listen in to what a small team of volunteers was up to.

Another newcomer to the group on that same day, Das Menon, and I listened as Rebecca Kimmons, Sarah Halstead, Thomas Worledge, and Jeff discussed the logistics of creating a statewide conference in a proud old West Virginia community that many had long ago written off.

Das, a native of India who came to the United States some 50 years ago and built a career in industrial design, and I, an immigrant from Germany's coal and steel region of Westphalia, were strangers to the group for only a moment. By the end of the meeting, we were both captivated by the openness, the candid discussion, the insight, and motivation of this group of people working to create a sustainable future for West Virginia.

They welcomed and valued the knowledge and experience I brought from living and working in a highly technical and industrialized region of Germany. They needed my organizational and graphic design skills. I was exceedingly amazed by the way I was immediately embraced—and put to work.

Das and I soon made our first visit to Richwood to scout the town for conference signage. I saw the passion of the people who were working to reinvent their community, and met Mayor Robert Johnson for the first time. We saw the Main Street buildings that would house a Maker Lab with demonstration 3-D printers, craft entrepreneurs, and the “conference living room.” It was an exciting proposition.

I signed on to lead a free pre-conference workshop on digital communications etiquette, and on the first day of the conference, met a roomful of eager learners. Conference attendees from all over the state were exploring Richwood using a clever fold-out map Das created, which was placed in the program I designed.

I met architect James Swiger of WYK Associates, Inc., who had come from Clarksburg to see the Maker Lab's 3-D printers. Dr. Peter Barr, president of Glenville State College, visited the Maker Lab as well, and thought he would like to host the next Create West Virginia Conference.

Indeed, the 2014 conference is going to Glenville. And now, among my clients is WYK Associates, whom I serve as marketing strategist.

I learned that Create West Virginia is much more than talk. It's a magnetic force that pulls together diverse creatives in

business, science, arts, education, social services and design, and sends them back to their own communities, excited about their own ideas, encouraged, and affirmed in their determination.

I'll present the free, preconference workshop on digital etiquette again in Glenville. I don't know what will come out of this year, but I know it will be good.



*In 2005, Jens Kiel left his home in Essen, Germany to marry a Boone County educator. An avid wordsmith and technology aficionado, he brought a background in advertising, marketing and information technology with him. His company, Made in Germany, is an award-winning marketing and creative strategy consultancy, helping businesses and non-profit organizations to communicate to their audience with impact. Learn more at [www.jenskiel.com](http://www.jenskiel.com)*