

Publishers Weekly, will speak at the Central Ohio Fiction Writers' Oct. 21-22 conference.

Dark-Hunter series author keynotes COFW conference

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ThisWeek Contributor



Sherrilyn Kenyon

Sherrilyn Kenyon, *New York Times* bestseller and the author dubbed "a grand dame of the paranormal" by *Publishers Weekly*, will speak at the Central Ohio Fiction Writers' Oct. 21-22 conference.

The "Dark-Hunters" vampire-slayers creator is an appropriate choice as keynote for a readers-and-writers gathering within haunting distance of Halloween. And Kenyon, who has additional series featuring shape-shifters, dragons and demons, will also participate in an open-to-the-public, multi-author book-signing during the conference.

"I adore meeting my fans. It's truly the highlight of my life," the prolific author recently told *ThisWeek*. "As for promoting myself...I can sell anyone's books better than my own. I was in a bookstore...where I met a lady while I was signing stock. She asked me if I knew of a good historical writer, and instead of telling her I was Kinley MacGregor (Kenyon's pen name for her historicals), I sold five books of my friends and none of mine."

When it comes to her self-promotion skills, Kenyon is modest. Her Web site (www.sherrilynkenyon.com) averages more than 120,000 visitors a week, has multiple entry points to four subsections, and offers five reader message boards. If you factor in her booksigning and public-speaking commitments, how does she balance her public relations efforts with penning novels for four publishers simultaneously?

"My assistant runs my life. Literally," the author explained. "She lays out my schedule and...is now answering most of my fan e-mail. Since I get upwards of 800 e-mails a day, I can't stay on top of it and write the books, I have another who helps me with the Web site. Three people ... monitor and run the bbs [bulletin boards] and chatroom." Kenyon's family assists in answering reader letters.

Lately, the multi-genre author has been winning new fans with her latest series featuring an anti-terrorist task force based out of Nashville, Tenn. -- her hometown. Describing the often humorous books as "suspense-light," Kenyon has fun with the world-saving agents of BAD (Bureau of American Defense). *Bad Attitude*, the first installment, is also her first hardcover release.

"I had no idea that it would be a hardback until after I had finished it," Kenyon said. "It was honestly a shock. But I would be lying if I said it didn't thrill me to no end that they thought enough of the book to publish it in hardcover. But what I'm happiest about is that Simon & Schuster is keeping the price down for readers."

The author will still maintain a paperback presence, however.

"I've spent most of my life poor as a church mouse, and there have been many times ... when I couldn't afford a new book by anyone." That included Kenyon's own books. "Honestly. I have almost no copies of my out-of-print backlist because I couldn't afford the \$4.99 price tag. S&S was kind enough to agree to bring the paperbacks out a quick six months after the publication of the hardcover. But in the end ... that's a marketing decision that's always made without an author's input."

Kenyon wrote her first book at age 7 and has more than 40 novels published, despite being dyslexic.

"The dyslexia is a bummer, as my copy-editors will tell you," she said. "My condition is so severe that at times it even manifests itself verbally."

However, she believes being ambidextrous and able to use both her right and left brain equally increases her ability to handle both creative pursuits and analytical tasks, such as her Web site design.

In fact, her skills extend to martial arts, fine arts, sword-fighting and music. She plays instruments as diverse as the banjo, the flute, the dulcimer and the drums. And during one interesting phase in her life, she was a sparring partner for two Golden Glove boxers.

This Renaissance woman hasn't had it easy, however, and credits romance novels with brightening her worst days.

"Life is hard for most people, and ... the last thing I needed was to read that you suffer all your life and then die a miserable death," she explained. "Romance novels show that sometimes ... if you hold on and believe in yourself, then you can affect a positive change in your life."

Her fans can attest to how much enjoyment Kenyon's genre bestsellers, including her romances, have brought into their lives. And the author appreciates her readers, who ignore literary prejudice toward popular fiction and give her novels a shot.

"I think people who disdain romance do so because they don't understand what the genre is, and it's easy to make fun of what you don't know," the author stated. "My suggestion is that books are like vegetables. Try something different, and you might find a whole new favorite dish."

Despite having more than six-million copies of her books in print worldwide, Kenyon makes her family a priority, and they keep her grounded, she said.

"I was in a bookstore with one of my sons, and I was explaining to him what his mom did for a living," she said. "I pulled one of my books off the shelf and showed him my picture in the back. His little eyes grew round, and his mouth dropped. Excited, he grabbed the book from my hand and went running over to a woman in the next aisle. His face beaming, he quickly said, 'Look! My doggie is in the back of the book!'"

"I had forgotten that the photo was of me and the family pet. So much for my 10 seconds of fame."

What: Sherrilyn Kenyon, aka Kinley MacGregor, will sign her paranormal and historical romance novels as part of a free, multi-author booksigning that includes Dianne Castell, Lori Foster, and Erin McCarthy. Registration for the entire conference is \$85.

When & where: Open-to-the-public booksigning, Saturday, Oct. 22, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. in the Adams Room of the Radisson Hotel at 7007 N. High St., Worthington. The conference, which requires registration, is Oct. 21-22 at the same location.

For more information: Visit Central Ohio Fiction Writers' Web site (www.cofw.org) for conference information and registration form.

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