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A Writer Goes From Conference Volunteer to Shamus Award Nominee All Because of Killer Nashville

Seven and a half years ago, when Jaden (Beth) Terrell met Killer Nashville founder Clay Stafford, the aspiring writer knew she wanted to play a role in bringing his vision for the conference to fruition. She knew she would have to devote long hours to the cause. What she didn't know was that those long hours would lead to the agent of her dreams, publication, and a nomination for the prestigious Shamus Award at Bouchercon this weekend.

"I met a lot of terrific agents at the conference," Terrell says, who is now Killer Nashville's Executive Director. "But my agent and I just clicked. She represents the kind of writing I do—dark, character-driven novels that straddle the line between mystery and thriller—and when she called to say she'd finished the book at her dermatologist's office and was trying not to let them see her cry over it, we both knew we had a match. She sold the book two months after we signed the contract."

Signing with her dream agent led to a two-book contract. Both books, which feature Nashville private detective Jared McKean, have been made into audio books and also translated into German. Then, a few months ago, Terrell received the news that the first book in the series, *Racing the Devil*, had been nominated for a Shamus Award. Presented by the Private Eye Writers of America, the Shamus is one of the most coveted awards in the mystery community—the kind of award where just being nominated can boost a writer's career.

None of it, Terrell maintains, would have been possible without Killer Nashville.

"Killer Nashville is the best thing that ever happened for my career. I'd recommend volunteering at Killer Nashville to any writer who's trying to break into the industry. This is a tough business, and the road to publication can be demoralizing. There are so many 'almosts,' so many opportunities for disappointment. But volunteering not only opens doors, it's also its own reward. Every time we get another Killer Nashville success story, I'm thankful Clay lets me be a part of it."

Those success stories have been racking up over the years, as more and more conference attendees sign contracts with agents and publishers. "Every year, writers get contracts through the Claymore contest and through the agent/editor round table. This year, two of our Claymore finalists signed with agents the week after the conference." Killer Nashville founder Clay Stafford adds "Our conference is all about giving back."

The Killer Nashville Thriller, Mystery, and Crime Literature Writers' Conference, held annually on the fourth full weekend in August, was created in 2006 by author/filmmaker Clay Stafford to bring together forensic experts, writers, and fans of crime and thriller literature. The conference draws attendees from as far away as Portmahomack, Scotland; Rome, Italy; and Hadano, Kanagawa, Japan. For interviews or more information: www.KillerNashville.com, www.ClaymoreAward.com, Contact@KillerNashville.com, 615-599-4032.