

THE REGISTER CITIZEN CITY & TOWN

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Community advocate concept

By JUNE PETERSON
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WINSTED — A Ridgefield attorney will take over the post of community lawyer advocate next month, it was announced yesterday by Claire Nader, director of The Shafek Nader Trust for the Community Interest.

Charlene LaVoie succeeds Ellen K. Thomas, the trust's first lawyer, who left the post early this year to return to her job at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Indianapolis. Thomas had taken a one-year leave of absence from her Indianapolis job to accept the Win-

sted position.

When reached yesterday, LaVoie said she was intrigued with the community advocate concept.

"It's an opportunity to give the citizen access to the skills of a lawyer in a way that has never been done before in this country," LaVoie said. "It's not like there's a million citizen advocates around. Hopefully as the project takes hold and succeeds there will be opportunities in other communities to do this kind of thing."

LaVoie, currently with the Ridgefield-based law firm of William M. Laviano, was one of several applicants for the job,

Nader said.

But LaVoie had that special quality needed in a community advocate, Nader said. She is dedicated to bringing power and authority to people, Nader said.

LaVoie's primary task will be to help townspeople gain access to local government and offering legal advice on government-oriented issues.

"There are lots of issues" for LaVoie to deal with in town, including the revision of the town charter and the dragged out dispute over a trailer placed on a Highland Lake right of way, Nader said.

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drew lawyer to Winsted job

"This is a process of getting proper policies in place," Nader said. "When you read the headlines they just scream out for community lawyers these days."

LaVoie will come to Winsted with a strong background in public issues. According to a press release issued by the trust, as an attorney LaVoie has concentrated on "employment discrimination, wrongful termination of employment, civil rights, unfair trade practices, securities, and special education." LaVoie has practiced law in federal and state courts in Connecticut and New York.

She is affiliated with the Amer-

ican Civil Liberties Union, American Trial Lawyers Association and the Women's Trial Lawyer's Caucus, the American Bar Association and the National Lawyers Guild.

A West Hartford native, LaVoie received her bachelor's degree in dental hygiene from the University of Bridgeport in 1976. She received a master's degree in public administration from New York University in 1978. LaVoie

has served on the dental hygiene faculty at the University of Bridgeport.

In 1984 LaVoie received her law degree from the University of Bridgeport School of Law, where she also won the "Service to the Community" award. In January 1985 she joined Laviano's firm.

The community lawyer program was launched by the trust in February 1989 with the appointment of Thomas. The trust is named after Shafek Nader, who died in 1986. He is the brother of Claire Nader and Ralph Nader, the nationally known consumer advocate. The goal of the project is to create a model community lawyer program.