Community lawyer's new office to include library, resource room

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WINSTED — A community library and resource room will be included in the new Main Street office for the town's community lawyer.

Community advocate Charlene LaVoie has spent this week moving and unloading boxes to set up her new office at the western end of a former factory on the corner of Main and Rowley streets. In the next few weeks, a library and meeting room will be created in the 100-year-old building. The old brick factory once housed the Strong Manufacturing Company and later the Dano Company.

The western entrance facing on Main Street leads into several oak-paneled offices that are being converted into an office for the community lawyer, an intern's office and space for a library and meeting room.

The library will house a variety of materials for individuals to learn about law, local government and environmental issues. The goal is to provide the resources for citizens to get effectively involved in local issues that concern them, LaVoie said.

"We have a number of materials now. Now that we have the facility for it, we can add to the collection," she said.

LaVoie is moving from a small office on Willow Street and said she is excited about the new facility. "It's nice to have some space to move around in," she said. "It's going to be an accessible place for citizens," she hoped.

LaVoie has been in the position of community lawyer for a little over a month after taking over for Ellen K. Thomas, who returned to Indiana after a year as Winsted's community lawyer.

The position, paid for out of the Shafeek Nader Trust, is intended to provide residents concerned about local political, environmental or legal issues with the support of someone familiar with how the legal system works. For example, Thomas was involved in writing an ordinance to ban the use of ozone-damaging foam packaging in Winsted.

LaVoie is available to citizens by appointment in her new office. Within the next few months, LaVoie said she hoped the library would be ready for use by the public.