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<http://www.gastongazette.com/news/gastonia-58984-inc-understand.html>

## Attorneys offer program to help residents understand their rights

By Anderson Phillips

The first in a series of lectures presented by the **Gastonia office of Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc.** will be **held at the Main Branch of the Gastonia library** on Monday.

The presentation, titled “When Am I Entitled to Unemployment Benefits and How Can I Obtain Those Benefits?”, will be given first in English at 6 p.m., and then in Spanish at 7:15, with each lecture being followed by a question and answer session.

The lecture series, which will be held once per month at the Gastonia library through December, will be presented by attorneys from both Legal Aid and the private bar. Each presentation will focus on a different topic relating to the legal rights of citizens, such as the circumstances under which criminal charges can be expunged, the rights of tenants and what a person’s legal options are if they cannot pay off their debts.

According to its website, **Legal Aid** is a nonprofit law firm that provides legal services in civil matters to low-income people.

“We provide legal services to indigent folks,” **Sharon Dove**, the managing attorney at the Gastonia office of Legal Aid, said. “We focus our practice on housing, but we also help with consumer protection issues.”

In order to qualify for the services of **Legal Aid’s Gastonia office**, a person must be a resident of Gaston, Lincoln, or Cleveland counties, meet financial eligibility requirements and be a United States citizen or an alien eligible under standards set by the Legal Service Corp.

The lecture series, however, is open to anyone who would like to learn more or has questions about their legal rights.

“Each lecture will be tailored to those without much legal knowledge,” **Dove** said. “We’d like to educate folks about when they’re entitled to benefits.”

Monday’s presentation will be given by Legal Aid staff attorney **Brian O’ Shaughnessy**.

### Lecture series dates:

#### July 11

When Am I Entitled to Unemployment Benefits and How Can I Obtain Those Benefits?  
Presented by Attorney Brian O’Shaughnessy

#### Aug. 8

What are My Rights as a Tenant?  
Presented by Attorney Missy Phelps

#### Sept. 12

Credit Reports: What Can and Cannot Be Reported Against Me?  
Presented by Attorney Sharon Dove

#### Oct. 3

When and How Can I Have Criminal Charges Expunged?  
Presented by Attorney Missy Phelps

#### Nov. 14

Wills and Powers of Attorney  
Presented by Attorney Jim Windham

#### Dec. 12

Help! I’m in Debt. What Are My Legal Rights if I Just Can’t Pay?  
Presented by Attorney Melanie Bull