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# Citizens target Shell

By **ALLEN LOTTINGER, JR.**  
*Staff writer*

National environmental leader, Lois Gibbs of the infamous Love Canal contamination case, lead a rally Wednesday of thirty-five national groups and state and local environmental leaders in support of full relocation of the Diamond community in Norco.

Many of the protesters were in town for a meeting of Coming Clean, a national coalition of

health, environmental, and community based organizations whose stated aim is to deal the chemical industry a fate similar to the tobacco industry.

As high noon approached, chants such as "Shame on Shell" and "Don't divide Diamond" could be heard as the group of about 40 protesters made their way down Poydras Street to One Shell Square.

Gibbs, who led the nation's first major community relocation battle in Love Canal, New York,

pledged her support to the relocation effort for residents of Diamond. "Shell, watch out because the people are coming after you," she said.

Citizens of Diamond and residents of New Orleans joined the national groups to protest Shell's division of Diamond, which has been battling Shell for relocation for many years. Wednesday's protest highlighted the national spotlight that is being turned on Shell for its refusal to include all

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# Shell

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members of Diamond in the Norco Voluntary Fenceline Property Purchase Program.

In addition to Gibbs, speakers from Green Peace and environmental movements from across the state pledged their support for total relocation. This pledge of support was put into a letter which was sent to Steven Miller, CEO of Shell.

Several Diamond residents spoke at the rally about respiratory problems they feel have been caused by living near the facility, which spews approximately 300 tons of toxic chemicals into the environment annually.

Dr. Ted Schettler, who has pub-

lished two books on the effects of chemicals on developing children, was one of those who spoke out about the effects of living on the fenceline of a refinery. "The emissions in Diamond have been measured," he said. "There is no question that exposure to dangerous chemicals is occurring there."

In response, Shell has developed a multi-faceted effort to address community concerns - the Good Neighbor Initiative. The three major components of this initiative being environmental, community health and safety, and quality of life.

"Shell has committed to reducing its toxic release inventory emissions by 30 percent over the next three years," said Shell spokesperson Lily Galland. "In addition to this, a community-based air quality monitoring system is being established."

Of the four streets in the Diamond neighborhood, only two have been slated as eligible to take advantage of Shell's Voluntary Fenceline Purchase Program. This program offers residents market value plus 30 percent in addition to several other incentives to residents who live directly on the fenceline of the refinery. As these properties are acquired by Shell, the plan is to create a greenbelt system which will serve as a buffer zone between the refinery and residences.

The main criticism of this program is that by only being available to houses that directly border the refinery, it will cause the community of Diamond to be split up. Galland says that while the company is willing to work with the residents of the historic neighborhood, there is currently no relocation program in place for the

entire community, which includes around 300 households.

But even residents who are eligible to participate in the fenceline purchase program are not satisfied with the price that the oil company is willing to pay for their houses.

"It is just not enough," said Juanita Johnson, who was offered \$98,000 to relocate from her home on Cathy St. "I would like to move to St. Rose but the cheapest house I can find there is \$113,000."

Johnson, who has lived in Diamond for 45 years, said that living near the refinery has caused nothing but problems. "My daughter and son are constantly having respiratory problems," she said. "We can't move though until we are fairly compensated for our property."