Coffee Party percolating on Treasure Coast with gathering in Jensen Beach

By Christin Erazo

Friday, November 5, 2010

JENSEN BEACH — Civility and solutions are what Bill Ramos hopes to bring to the table as the organizer of the Treasure Coast Coffee Party — a chapter of the national group formed in response to the conservative Tea Party movement.

The local group will meet for the first time this morning at 10 at Hoke Library in Jensen Beach, 1150 Jack Williams Way.

The Coffee Party movement was started on the social networking site Facebook in January 2010 by documentary filmmakers and activists Annabel Park and Eric Byler. Stated on its website is the movement’s mission: to “give voice to Americans who want to see cooperation in government.”

The national group’s Facebook page has more than 319,000 fans.

The movement is non-party-affiliated, and Ramos said it represents “the quiet majority.”

Ramos, 51, is a Jensen Beach resident who ran for the state Senate in 2009 and state House in 2006 and 2008. A former Democrat, Ramos said he hopes this party brings a quieter power into politics.

“We don’t yell, we don’t scream and we don’t threaten,” Ramos said. “We believe that government is more controlled by special interests than the people. Once politicians are elected, they seem to forget that they work for the people. The party’s goal is to bring that to light.”
The first meeting will introduce people to what the party is, their motivations and how to come to democratic solutions in a civil, non-partisan manner.

Ramos said people who attend the meeting must sign a civility pledge to avoid heated arguments between members.

“Yelling puts the focus on the question and not on the answer,” Ramos said. “We find a lot of people are like us; we don’t want confrontation, we want answers.”

He said the group won’t look down on the opposing conservative movement, but the Coffee Party approach is quieter and will prove just as effective.

“A thousand whispers can’t be ignored,” he said. “I hope it appeals to people, because I do believe in the better nature of people and a peaceful way to get things done.”

Kevin Wagner, 38, an assistant professor of political science at Florida Atlantic University, said political movements like the Tea Party and the Coffee Party are not unusual, “just a response from interest groups that think the government doesn’t represent what they believe.”

Wagner said that the United States has always had movements, but they’ve become more noticeable because of media coverage. Movements come and go, but each one’s staying power relies on passion.

IF YOU GO

What: Treasure Coast Coffee Party meeting

When: Saturday at 10 a.m.

Where: Hoke Library in Jensen Beach, 1150 Jack Williams Way

Contact: Bill Ramos at (772) 882-6801