

## OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES



Photos by BILL WECHTER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Viviana Bonomie, 9, center, takes her turn singing a line of a song for peace to Congressman Brian Bilbray, right, at a private Carlsbad residence Tuesday.

# Children pitch message of peace to Bilbray

JESSICA MUSICAR • FOR THE NORTH COUNTY TIMES

CARLSBAD — More than a dozen smiling, inquisitive children shared a message of peace with Congressman Brian Bilbray during a special meeting of the Kids for Peace on Tuesday.

The Carlsbad-based group, which promotes children working together to create peace both locally and globally, sang a song, spoke about its efforts and presented a book to the congressman, who in turn read "House Mouse, Senate Mouse," a children's story about how a bill is passed.

The meeting was also attended by parents and teens involved in the nonpartisan organization.

Greeting the congressman with the word "namaste," which means "the good in me sees the good in you," each of the children, mostly between the ages of 6 to 8, spoke of the fun things they do in their monthly meetings, like playing peaceful games, singing songs, making crafts and sending "Peace-Packs" to children in other nations. The hand-painted packs typically hold



Hana Craft, 8, top, and Olivia Mora, 7, listen as Bilbray reads a children's book about government Tuesday.

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school supplies, a toothbrush, a toy, and a special note written by the children.

"We let them know they have friends in San Diego," one little girl said.

The group is also working to create a U.S. Department of Peace by lobbying lawmakers such as Bilbray, R-Escondido, said founder and co-director Jill McManigal, who held the event in her home. Several of the children explained to Bilbray that a Department of Peace would help create more harmony in the nation and the world, and asked him to join in their effort.

"There would be a secretary of peace to help advise the president and there would be a peace academy where we would learn to be master peacemakers," Hana, McManigal's daughter, said. "I would love to go to school there!"

Outside, four people stood with signs emblazoned with phrases such as "Bilbray, the next Republican scandal"; and "Bilbray keeps the grand jury busy." Jan Atkinson, the co-coordinator of the Americans for the Department of Peace, San Diego region, said there are bills before Congress to create a U.S. cabinet-level department focused on peace domestically and abroad.

"We are not anti-war, we just want all peaceful options to be exhausted before we take military action," Atkinson said.

She said two-thirds of the bill's funding will go back to local congressional districts to fund programs that have been effective in decreasing violence. Atkinson added that her organization and the Kids for Peace will be lobbying in February for House Resolution 3760 and Senate Bill 1756.

After sitting with the children and answering questions about his daughters, where he lives and how he votes, Bilbray, who represents the 50th district, said there are few things more important than teaching children that the world is in their hands.

"Lord knows they will have to live with it," Bilbray said.

For more information about Kids for Peace, or to become part of the group, contact