

Teddy bears and tiny turtles cheer children

BOISE — After spending his entire life, almost seven years, in a refugee camp in Tanzania, Vanance Nebutanga came to live in Idaho with his parents and his four siblings.

Their family arrived with little more than the clothes

on their backs and hope for a brighter future. Vanance's mother Especiosia said that even though life is very hard here, America is a blessing because there is enough food and her babies are not hungry. She is thankful that they are

safe and that there is clean water to drink.

Earlier this year, the Nebutangas came to Catholic Charities of Idaho for help filling out job applications and to look for summer programs for their children. While

Vanance's parents were busy, he stepped into "The Closet," a free thrift shop where CCI clients can get clothing, shoes, bags, household items, linens and toys. With a bright smile, he emerged holding a plush red teddy bear. Vanance had never had a teddy bear and named it *Osadadia*, meaning "America."

Meanwhile, the children at St. Mary Bible School in Boise made little stuffed turtles for

the children like Vanance who come to CCI with their families. The gifts are called "Comfort Critters" to comfort those in need. Each turtle had a small pocket into which the children tucked notes of encouragement for its recipient.

"These 'Comfort Critters' were made with love and care and stand as a reminder to us all to be there for one another," said Christopher Davis, CCI spokesman.



COMFORT CRITTERS — A member of Boise St. Mary Bible School shows her "Comfort Critter" a little more love before placing a special note in its pouch for a child in need at Catholic Charities of Idaho. (ICR photo courtesy of Catholic Charities of Idaho)