

# Burt Riskedahl brings co

## BIO BITS

**Name:** Burt L. Riskedahl, 50, Burleigh County judge

**Personal:** Wife Margo, science instructor at U-Mary; son, Mark, 24, in Minneapolis; daughter, Diane, 22, graduated from Concordia College, in Chico, Calif.

**Accomplishments:** Senior county judge, past president of North Dakota Association of Counties, trustee since 1976 for Jamestown College.

**Who I am:** "Somewhat quiet, somewhat private, but, I hope, a caring, concerned person."



By **JANELL COLE**  
Tribune Staff Writer

A couple of years ago, Burleigh County Judge Burt Riskedahl was holding court for a man freshly charged with a crime. The man barked belligerently at Riskedahl but the judge ignored the outbursts.

After the court hearing, Riskedahl was asked why he had put up with the man's obnoxious behavior.

"He was having a bad day," the judge said in his soft voice and smiled his gentle smile.

Riskedahl aims to bring compassion to the court system and for 12 years he has practiced that philosophy, keeping in mind

# mpassion to courtroom

each defendant is a person.

"In a court like ours, it's important for defendants not to become numbers," he said.

He means that county court judges hand down sentences for

him to suggest a new sentencing-alternatives program in Burleigh County. Besides jail time and fines, the defendants attend classes. Early reports on the program are encouraging. He also

in the mental health commitments that are done in county court.

A native of Tuttle, Riskedahl was working in a juvenile treatment center in Duluth, Minn., seeing many teen-agers who had been in the juvenile court system. He became interested in law as a way helping people.

After law school he worked for the former North Dakota Department of Social Services, opened a law practice in Bismarck 1974 and was appointed to the bench in 1979.

Riskedahl is the immediate past president of the North Dakota Association of Counties and has been a trustee for Jamestown College since 1976.

## MOVERS & SHAKERS

misdemeanors only, and he considers many of the defendants "troubled people" more than out-and-out criminals. He hopes compassion in court can turn them around.

It was Riskedahl's search for a way to give defendants "something constructive" that led

started "check class" several years ago for people with bad-check charges.

By now, you won't be surprised to learn Riskedahl was a social worker before going to law school.

"It's a positive thing," he said, noting, for instance that he is more interested than most judges

its original capacity