

# Health Court Judge McLaughlin wins Marie Hoff Award



Michael R. McLaughlin

BOISE — Ada County Mental Health Court Judge Michael R. McLaughlin is the 2010 recipient of Catholic Charities of Idaho's Marie D. Hoff Social Justice Achievement Award.

The Hoff award, which will be presented to McLaughlin Sept. 18 at Bishop Kelly High School during Fall Conference, recognizes a person or organization that seeks to call forth and engage people to transform social structures that perpetuate injustice and poverty, and lives out their faith following the principles of Catholic social teaching. The award comes with a plaque and a check for

\$250.

McLaughlin was raised in Mountain Home and attended the University of Idaho, Moscow, where he graduated with his law degree in 1976. He joined his father's law firm and served time as a prosecuting attorney before buying his father's firm in 1984. In 1997, he was appointed a district judge by Gov. Phil Batt, and in 2005, helped set up the Ada County Mental Health Court.

"I felt blessed when I was asked to be judge for the Mental Health Court," said McLaughlin, a parishioner at Holy Apostles, Meridian.

The Mental Health Court provides a continuum of care that usually lasts two years and helps people suffering from mental illness. These people usually have little or no family or support systems, earn low incomes, have poor job skills and substance abuse issues, and cannot afford to maintain prescription medication or psychiatric care. Those appearing in court have committed a felony and have been diagnosed with a mental illness, including bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia and chronic and persistent depression.

The court coordinates re-

sources provided by the departments of Health and Welfare and Corrections, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, substance abuse counselors, prosecuting attorneys and defense counsels and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

"It is really hard to see people every day self-destructing in court because of their mental illnesses and other issues," the judge said. "I say a prayer to St. Jude before going into court; this gives me strength. I see so much potential in these people. I know what I am doing is God's work and my prayer life sustains my calling."