

Ed Hightower, of Edwardsville (Ill.), is known nationally as an outstanding Division I basketball referee, officiating in twelve NCAA Final Four tournaments. In 1999, he was named one of the top 100 St. Louis area athletes of the century, and he has received numerous awards for his professional officiating.

But as much as he enjoys basketball, Hightower makes it clear that his work as superintendent of the Edwardsville Community Unit School District is his top priority. He has served in the position since 1995 and before that was assistant superintendent for Alton schools.

Hightower is committed to the district's teachers and students. He has been recognized locally and nationally for his contributions to education, winning the 1989 Illinois Distinguished Principals Award and recognition in the 1992 Who's Who of American Educators. In 1993 he won the Illinois Principal of the Year award and the National Distinguished Principals Award.

In 1990 he received the Elijah P. Lovejoy Human Rights Award and the Illinois Jaycees 10 Outstanding Young Persons Award. In 2007, he was selected as the Trails West Distinguished Citizen of the Year. He serves on the SIU Board of Trustees, Board of Trustees for Lewis and Clark Community College, and St. Anthony's Hospital. He is also active in the Edwardsville Rotary Club.

He holds bachelor's, master's and specialist degrees from SIU Edwardsville and a doctorate in education administration from St. Louis University.

He and his wife, Barbara, have two daughters, Julie and Jennifer.