

Ed Hightower receives U.S. Basketball Writers Association's Lifetime Achievement Award

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EDWARDSVILLE — Former NCAA referee and local educator, Ed Hightower, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the U.S. Basketball Writers Association on Monday, April 9. The College Basketball Awards dinner was held at the Missouri Athletic Club in downtown St. Louis.

“I want to thank the members of the U.S. Basketball Writers Association and the St. Louis community for this Lifetime Achievement Award,” said Hightower in his acceptance speech. “My life has been touched by so many wonderful people and supporters, all of whom have been there for me during my incredible journey.”

Recognized as one of the top NCAA basketball officials of all time, Hightower officiated Division I basketball for 36 years, including 12 NCAA Final Four tournaments, the Goodwill Games and World Championships. He received the National College Official of the Year award in 1992 and 1995, and is inducted in the St. Louis and Illinois Sports Hall of Fames. In 1999, he was named as one of the top 100 St. Louis athletes of the century.

In addition to his noble career as a referee, Hightower served 41 years in public education, including 19 years as superintendent in the Edwardsville School District. Prior to his role as superintendent, he worked as a teacher, principal and administrator in Alton, Ill.

“I am the luckiest person in the world, having enjoyed two wonderful careers — an educator of 41 years and an NCAA referee for 36 years. In both careers, I’ve had the tremendous responsibility of making a difference in the lives of young people,” said Hightower.

Other honorees of the evening included: Norm Stewart, former University of Missouri and Hall of Fame coach, recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award; Jalen Brunson of Villanova University, recipient of the Oscar Robertson Trophy as national player of the year; Trae Young of University of Oklahoma, recipient of the Wayman Tisdale Award as national freshman of the year; and Tony Bennett of University of Virginia, recipient of the Henry Iba Award as national coach of the year.

Hightower is currently the Executive Director of the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation, helping spearhead the development of the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities and instilling its four pillars throughout Madison County—respect, dignity, understanding, and forgiveness. To learn more about the MJCHF® and its programs, visit www.mjchf.org.