



**Columbus
Urban League**

Empowering Communities. Changing Lives.

Stephanie Hightower -- Bio

Stephanie A. Hightower is the 8th President and CEO (and first female President and CEO) of the Columbus Urban League (CUL), Columbus' oldest and most successful urban family advocate. Since taking the helm in 2011, Ms. Hightower has transformed the organization into a more relevant and effective force in helping individuals and families overcome poverty and achieve self-sufficiency -- today's civil rights struggle -- by offering a holistic set of initiatives focused on economic transformation, foundational education and family stabilization to touch and transform the lives of more than 7,000 people a year.



STEPHANIE HIGHTOWER

President & CEO, Columbus Urban League
Council Member, IAAF
Olympic Athlete

CUL stands as Central Ohio's oldest and most successful family advocate. Fighting for equity and justice for nearly a century, CUL's wrap-around family strategies and personal mentoring efforts include early learning and after-school education, workforce readiness and career coaching, ex-offender re-entry and fatherhood coaching, financial capabilities, housing advocacy and foreclosure prevention, and family stabilization. Under Ms. Hightower's leadership, CUL met and exceeded ambitious goals around four critical initiatives centered on foundational education, economic transformation, family stabilization, and organizational sustainability. Within a three year period, CUL achieved unprecedented success by ensuring nine out of ten graduates of its Head Start enter kindergarten reading or reading-ready; assisting more than 500 hard-to-place chronically unemployed individuals in secured full-time jobs; putting 700 young people to work through a summer youth employment program that provided more than \$900,000 in income for their families; and securing the philanthropic investments of the city's major business partners to complete a \$3 million community campaign.

A true champion, Ms. Hightower's professional portfolio includes a wealth of experiences in athletics and public service. Those opportunities propelled her toward the pursuit of excellence and to advocate for equality, equity and fairness. A testament to her passions and beliefs over the last 25 years, she has successfully taken on the challenge of leadership roles in public education and higher education, government affairs, amateur athletics, and the not-for-profit human services arena.

Formerly vice president of institutional advancement for the Columbus College of Art & Design, Hightower exceeded eight-digit development and fundraising goals for capital improvements and endowment growth. She served as president of the Columbus school board from 2001 until 2005, a \$1.3 billion enterprise.

Hightower is among the greatest student athletes in the history of Ohio State and one of the highest profile female track athletes of the late 1970s and early 80s. Hightower was a world record holder, 1980 Olympian and was an NCAA and Big 10 champion in the hurdles. In four years at Ohio State, from 1977-1980, she was undefeated in Big 10 competition.

Hightower has been equally world-class in her sport since retiring. Active in USA Track & Field's Athletes Advisory Committee as an athlete, she became active as a volunteer and an administrator, serving in elected positions as chair of the women's track & field committee and eventually as president of the federation. Hightower now holds a position on the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF). She was selected to serve as the women's team manager at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, was the Chief of the Delegation for Team USA at the 2003 World Outdoor Championships in Paris and head manager at the 1999 World Championships in Seville, Spain. She also was an Assistant Manager for Team USA at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

Hightower's additional civic involvement includes: Future Ready Columbus, Community Engagement Council, Chair; City Council President Zach Klein's Advisory Committee; African American Leadership Academy, Advisory Board; US Bank, Advisory Officer; Columbus Zoo, Board of Directors, Member at Large; Columbus School for Girls, Board Member and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, Advisory Board.

She is mother to Cameron Baker, a graduate of Haverford College and Contract Analyst at Cardinal Health.

About the Columbus Urban League:

The Columbus Urban League (CUL) stands as Central Ohio's oldest and most successful family advocate. Fighting for equity and justice for nearly a century, the organization has emerged as a respected, relevant and effective force in overcoming poverty. Its coaches and experts, who come from and uniquely understand the urban community, rely on a holistic array of best practice initiatives focused on economic transformation, foundational education and family stabilization to touch and transform the lives of more than 7,000 people a year. Under the leadership of its first female CEO and president, Ms. Stephanie Hightower, the Columbus Urban League is now ranked among the top 5% of all 88 urban league affiliates across the country.