

The stars come out to pay tribute to Patti LaBelle

Written by

An all-star line-up of performers and presenters showed up Saturday to celebrate the 30th anniversary of UNCF's annual television special, An Evening of Stars®. Patti LaBelle, who was presented with the organization's prestigious Award of Excellence, was praised for her artistry and her longtime commitment to UNCF. An Evening of Stars® (AEOS)

Tribute to Patti LaBelle Presented by Target was taped before a live audience at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, CA and aired nationwide January 24 and 25, 2009 on BET and WGN America and on selected network stations across the country.

This year's roster of presenters and performers included Yolanda Adams, Big Daddy Kane, Wayne Brady, Kobe Bryant, WGN's Merri Dee, Fantasia, Vivica A. Fox, Entertainment Tonight's Kevin Frazier, Jennifer Hudson, Tom Joyner, BET Chairman and CEO Debra Lee, Le Toya Luckett, Mario, Duane Martin, Lisa Raye McCoy, Brian McKnight, Chrisette Michelle, Mo'Nique, Shemar Moore, Holly Robinson Peete, Access Hollywood's Shaun Robinson, VH1's Celebrity Fit Club's Dr. Ian Smith, Raven Symoné, and Essence Cares founder, Susan L. Taylor. Former LaBelle group members Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash made a surprise appearance singing the LaBelle

favorite, "Somebody Somewhere." Beyoncé, Wyclef Jean and Mariah Carey appeared in special taped messages to the "Lady of Soul."

"It's such an honor to receive this award from UNCF," said Patti LaBelle. "I'm honored to join stars like Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Lou Rawls, Quincy Jones and Smokey Robinson who have received UNCF's Award of Excellence, and I'm honored to be able to contribute to UNCF's mission of helping kids get a college education. If there's one thing we can all agree on, it's UNCF's motto: A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

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The 30th anniversary celebration also included the presentation of the UNCF Founders Award to The Ray Charles Foundation in recognition of the late singer's longstanding support of the nation's largest minority scholarship fund. Ray Charles Foundation president, Valerie Ervin, accepted the award.

"It's a great honor to be recognized by UNCF. Ray was a great believer in and supporter of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and this was always one of his philanthropic priorities," said Ervin. Jazz stylist Nancy Wilson became the first recipient of the UNCF Founders Award last year. The award is given each year to an individual whose work and service reflect a commitment to UNCF and the importance of minority higher education—the kind of commitment that led to the founding of UNCF more than sixty years ago.

This year, UNCF also launched "STAR POWER" its first AEOS online campaign. STAR POWER invites its donors and friends to create or join online teams to help raise funds to support minority education. With a fundraising goal of \$1 million, the campaign has been running since September 14, 2008 to February 15, 2009. Participants can upload photos, send invitation and thank you emails, and much more through their individual or team web pages and are encouraged to post their links on Facebook and MySpace as well. The captains of the three teams that raise the most money will be eligible to win an AEOS VIP packages which include tickets to the taping of An Evening of Stars, transportation to and from the event, luxury accommodations and VIP passes to all AEOS activities and more. To learn more visit [www.an eveningofstars.org](http://www.an-eveningofstars.org) and click on the Star Power icon.

"STAR POWER is an easy way for people who believe in the power of education to come together and shape the future of tomorrow's leaders," said Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D., UNCF

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president and CEO. “Anyone can create a STAR POWER team and inspire their own personal network of friends, family and colleagues to help put a college education within reach of every child. It’s simple: Just visit UNCF.org and click on STAR POWER.” An Evening of Stars® Tribute to Patti LaBelle is presented by Target. National sponsors are AT&T, McDonald’s and Toyota. American Airlines is the official airline of An Evening of Stars® and Wachovia is the VIP Hospitality sponsor.

BET and WGN America are official media partners.

UNCF—the United Negro College Fund—is the nation’s oldest and most successful minority education assistance organization. Its mission is to increase minority degree attainment by providing financial support to its 39 member institutions, reducing financial barriers to college and serving as a national advocate for minority education. UNCF institutions and other historically black colleges and universities are highly effective, awarding 18 percent of African American baccalaureate degrees. UNCF administers more than 400 programs, including scholarship, internship and fellowship, mentoring, summer enrichment, and curriculum and faculty development programs. Today, UNCF supports more than 60,000 students at over 900 colleges and universities across the country. UNCF’s recently redesigned logo and brand identity feature UNCF’s torch of leadership in education and its widely recognized motto, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.”® Learn more at www.UNCF.org.