



An Evening of Stars®

The Early Years

One of the longest running televised events in U.S. history, *An Evening of Stars®* began nearly three decades ago in 1979 as the Parade of Stars, a three-hour syndicated telethon launched by legendary singer Lou Rawls, who set out to raise funds for UNCF—the United Negro College Fund.

Over the years, *The Lou Rawls Parade of Stars®* took on several formats, becoming a 12-hour telethon before taking on a new and exciting format as *An Evening of Stars®: A Celebration of Educational Excellence* in 1998. While *An Evening of Stars®* has evolved over the years, the message has remained the same – supporting minority higher education as an essential path to ensure the future success of our nation.

During its first year, *The Lou Rawls Parade of Stars®* telethon raised \$3.5 million for minority education. Celebrity appearances garnered support for UNCF and educational excellence. Those classic shows featured top entertainers, including Sammy Davis, Jr., Bill Cosby, Tony Bennett, The Four Tops, and The Commodores, as well as a special appearance by President Ronald Reagan.

In 1984, *The Lou Rawls Parade of Stars®* changed to a 12-hour telethon and made history by becoming the first nationally televised fundraiser to benefit minority higher education.

It aired in 53 different cities across the country and produced more than a 100 percent increase in pledges and gifts over the previous year.

The Lou Rawls Parade of Stars® telethon continued to feature a Who's Who of the nation's most recognizable talent as performers and presenters for the show. By the end of this important era, *The Lou Rawls Parade of Stars®* had raised approximately \$156.6 million for UNCF, its member institutions and students.

The Birth of An Evening of Stars®

In 1998, when UNCF introduced *An Evening of Stars®: A Celebration of Educational Excellence*, it brought into its fold the five-time Emmy award winning producer of the Academy Awards, Louis J. Horvitz, to serve as Executive Producer and Director of the show.

The change proved effective. That year, the four-hour special aired on 60 television stations and reached more than 90 million viewers across the country. The show raised \$12.9 million for scholarships to send deserving students to college. It featured the usual spirited entertainment and added compelling success stories about UNCF students and alumni. Overnight ratings increased 31 percent over the 1997 airing, revenues increased by 4 percent and production costs were reduced by 17 percent.

In 2004, UNCF began presenting its Award of Excellence, honoring artists who combined artistic excellence with support for UNCF and its member institutions. This year's honoree is Patti LaBelle. Past honorees include Lou Rawls (2004), Quincy Jones (2005), Stevie Wonder (2006), Aretha Franklin (2007) and Smokey Robinson (2008).

*An Evening of
Stars® Today*

Last year, for the first time, UNCF presented the *UNCF Founders Award*, which UNCF will give annually to a popular artist whose work and service reflects the commitment to UNCF and its mission exemplified by the leaders who founded the organization. The recipient of the first-ever *UNCF Founders Award* was multiple Grammy-award winning jazz vocalist Nancy Wilson. This year, UNCF's Founder's Award will be presented 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.

An Evening of Stars®, in all its formats, has made a major contribution to bringing UNCF's mission of minority higher education to wider public attention. The results demonstrate the success that UNCF and its schools have achieved. In 1979, when the fundraiser was first taped, there were approximately 500,000 African American students attending college. Today, thanks in large part to UNCF's efforts, more than 2.2 million young African Americans are enrolled in a college or university