

Cookie Johnson and Tina Knowles Honored at Elizabeth Taylor Gala for Their HIV Work

The Elizabeth Taylor Night of Compassion HIV fundraiser named Cookie Johnson—wife of Magic—ETAF’s 2025 Champion. Plus: Jordin Sparks!

September 24, 2025 By [Trent Straube](#)

It was ladies’ night in a big way at the [Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation \(ETAF\)](#) fundraising gala. Cookie Johnson was recognized as ETAF’s 2025 Champion, and Tina Knowles was presented with the Elizabeth Taylor Commitment to End AIDS Award. Plus, singer Jordin Sparks wowed the audience at the September 19 Beverly Hills [HIV and AIDS](#) event titled “The Elizabeth Taylor Night of Compassion.”



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Cookie Johnson (@thecookiej)

Johnson has been in the global spotlight for nearly four decades as the wife of [Magic Johnson](#), the basketball icon who in 1991, at the height of his career, shocked the world by announcing that he had tested positive for [HIV](#) and was retiring. He's perhaps the most famous face of the epidemic, and his wife has used her platform to continuously share education and compassion. Cookie, a renowned entrepreneur, author and philanthropist, was recognized with the 2025 Champion award for "her work standing up for people affected by HIV and AIDS, just as [Elizabeth Taylor](#) did before," according to an ETAF statement.

"This is, of course, something that is very near to my heart. This foundation has been around almost as long as my husband and I have been fighting against this disease," Johnson told the audience. "Elizabeth was so brave and stood up and fought against this disease. She stood by her friends, and she stood by the LGBTQ community."



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A post shared by Elizabeth Taylor AIDS FDN (@elizabethtayloraidsfoundation)

Similarly, Tina Knowles was honored for "her ongoing support for people living with HIV and her long-standing allyship with the LGBTQ+ community." Also a businesswoman and author—plus a fashion designer and mom to singers Beyoncé and Solange—Knowles used her moment to thank ETAF's "tireless work," stating: "I have been a longtime admirer of the organization and its founder, Elizabeth Taylor. Tonight, I ask you all to stand for Elizabeth Taylor in reverence and appreciation of her commitment and impact on the world. I dedicate this award to her."

Knowles's acceptance speech included a prerecorded video of her HIV advocacy work narrated by Beyoncé: "To my mother and my hero, Tina Knowles, we are all grateful for your hard work, love,

empathy, acceptance and belief in the human spirit to thrive. Tonight, we are proud to honor you with the 2025 Elizabeth Taylor Commitment to End AIDS Award.”

Knowles lost a [gay nephew Johnny](#) to AIDS in 1998. [She has described him as more like a brother and best friend growing up.](#) And indeed, Beyoncé dedicated her 2022 album, Renaissance, an homage to gay house music, to her “Uncle Johnny.”

Hosted by Emmy Award-winning TV personality Melvin Robert, the gala included an exclusive look at items from the Elizabeth Taylor Archive and was presented by sponsor Gilead Sciences, a major HIV drugmaker.

Actress and icon [Elizabeth Taylor](#) became a global AIDS activist in the 1980s and founded ETAF in 1991. Among several other initiatives and programs, the group [supports HIV Is Not a Crime Awareness Day](#), marked each February 28 in honor of her February 27 birthday. She died in 2011 at age 79.