



— 35 Years —  
**FOUR PILLAR**  
QUALITY | RESPONSIBILITY | VISION | INTEGRITY



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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **H.J. Russell Family Receives Council for Quality Growth's 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Four Pillar Award**

*Atlanta Celebrates Herman J. Russell Sr.'s Legacy of Entrepreneurship and Vision for Success*

ATLANTA, GA – On October 10, 2024, the [Council for Quality Growth](https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org) held its 35<sup>th</sup> annual [Four Pillar Tribute](https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org) in honor of Herman J. Russell Sr. and his living legacy through Donata Russell Ross, H. Jerome Russell, and Michael Russell Sr. for the family's commitment to quality and their lasting contributions to metro Atlanta, Georgia, and far beyond. Their chosen theme for the evening was *Pure Grit. Built to Last.*, inspired by the family patriarch's humble beginnings and success against all odds. The 2024 Four Pillar Tribute was presented by the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Delta Air Lines, Georgia Power, and Norfolk Southern. Donata, Jerome, and Michael received the Four Pillar Award among friends, family, and 1,500 other guests in the Georgia Ballroom of the Georgia World Congress Center.

Sally Riker, 2024 Chair of the Council for Quality Growth and Vice President Strategy + Growth at Atlas, presented Jerome and Michael Russell with the Four Pillar Award. "Just like their father, the Russell Family today continues to take their successes and turn them into opportunities for others," said Sally Riker, 2024 Chair of the Council for Quality Growth. "We are proud to bring Atlanta together tonight to celebrate this family that keeps building our city up for this generation, and for the next."



*[From left to right: Sally Riker, T. Dallas Smith, Keith Mason, Michael Russell, Jerome Russell, Jay Bailey, Mori Russell, Benjamin Russell, Zane Major, and Michael Paris]*

In their acceptance, Michael and Jerome told the Herman Russell story from their own perspective, as they watched their father exceed all expectations. "H.J.'s reputation in Atlanta's business community was a quality builder and valuable partner," said Jerome. "Our father's track record for quality work preceded his race."

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They described the Council’s ‘Four Pillars’ as “part of H.J.’s DNA,” which built a life a determination for his children, and their children, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation or G3. “If Vision, Quality, and Responsibility were the foundation and pillars of H. J.’s life and legacy, then Integrity was the roof that covered it,” said Michael Russell.

From their father, Donata, Jerome, and Michael learned the importance of hard work, the value of a dollar, and the importance of showing up. Through these lessons and many more, the Russell Family successfully own and operate one of the largest Black business enterprises in the U.S., including H.J. Russell & Company, Russell New Urban Development, Concessions International, and the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE), by which they pay it forward to other aspiring business leaders. “Our platform of generational Black family businesses of 73 years is the legacy we use to inspire other entrepreneurs,” said Jerome.

Michael E. Paris, President & CEO of the Council for Quality Growth, added, “This night reminds us just how far Herman Russell’s legacy reaches. His entrepreneurial spirit held build this city, his leadership was inspiring to those around him, and his legacy continues to be part of the success our region celebrates today.”



*[Council for Quality Growth’s 2024 Chair Sally Riker presents Jerome & Michael Russell with the Council’s 35th Four Pillar Award]*

The Four Pillar Tribute recognizes leadership and how the recipients display the ‘Four Pillars’ of leadership – Quality, Responsibility, Vision, and Integrity – through their work and in their everyday lives. A distinguished group of speakers paid tribute to the Russell Family. On *Quality*, Ernest Greer, Co-President of Greenberg Traurig, reflected on his own memories of being inspired by Herman Russell from a young age, later working with him, and how quality was always a central theme in his life. “Quality wasn’t a goal for Mr. Russell,” said Greer, “but a deep-seated expectation.”

On *Responsibility*, Jay Bailey, President & CEO of the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE), recalled the many responsibilities that Herman Russell Sr. took on through his life. These included the responsibility to fix



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what needed fixing, to put his earnings to a higher cause, to create pathways for others to prosperity, and to show his children and grandchildren how to take these responsibilities as their own. Bailey highlighted the successes of RICE that have resulted, including the creation of 2,500 jobs and \$600 million in economic value to Atlanta. “Herman J. Russell Sr. was directly responsible for Atlanta being the city we love today,” said Bailey.

On *Vision*, Keith Mason, Founder at KWM Capital Management, reflected on the close ties between the Mason and Russell Families in the 1950s and 60s. Mason served in several capacities with Herman Russell, including the Georgia Ports Authority, in which he recalls Herman’s aptitude for creating relationships that pushed societal boundaries of the time. “His vision was not just building major projects in Atlanta and Georgia, but also building relationships with people from different races, ethnicity, and geography that help lead to more economic opportunity for more people,” said Mason.

On *Integrity*, members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation of the Russell Family, Zane Major, Mori Russell, and Benjamin Russell, focused on what their parents have already taught them about life and business. Collectively, G3 has already assumed the quality, vision, and responsibility of the generations before them, but they were each able to identify how integrity is an ongoing value in their parents’ lives. “Our family’s reputation in integrity holds the most importance in our ability to still be here, in business, 60 plus years later,” said Mori Russell.

The Russell’s Four Pillar Tribute also featured outstanding musical performances by three prominent Atlanta artists. Five-time Grammy Award Winner, CeeLo Green, daughter Mayor Maynard Jackson, Alexandra Jackson, and Atlanta-based R&B artist, Chae Stephen, together, performed a moving Musical Tribute with a carefully curated selections of Herman J. Russell Sr.’s favorite artists, including Sam Cooke, Billie Holiday, and Marvin Gaye. Atlanta jazz band Lil’ John Roberts and the Senators provided supporting music throughout. Herman Russell’s alma mater, Tuskegee University Golden Voices Choir, performed the opening act.

T. Dallas Smith, Founder & CEO of T. Dallas Smith & Company and close friend of H.J., served as the Tribute’s Master of Ceremonies. The evening also featured remarks from Georgia’s 83<sup>rd</sup> Governor, Brian Kemp, and Atlanta’s 61<sup>st</sup> Mayor, Andre Dickens, welcomed guests to the City of Atlanta. Tad Hutcheson with Delta Air Lines and Audrey King with Georgia Power also spoke on behalf of their companies. The Honorable Reverend Raphael Warnock, United States Senator and Senior Pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, delivered the invocation.

An esteemed group of Tribute Chairs were selected to pay tribute to the H.J. Russell Family and their lasting legacy on Atlanta and beyond, including:

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|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Jay Bailey           | Virginia Hepner     | Keith Mason      | Regynald Washington |
| Leona Barr-Davenport | Doug Hertz          | Dave Moody       | Mack Wilbourn       |
| Dan T. Cathy         | Bob Holder          | Egbert Perry     | Bruce Williams      |
| Cynthia Day          | Tommy Holder        | Sylvia Russell   | Ambassador          |
| David Eidson         | John Jackson        | T. Dallas Smith  | Andrew Young        |
| Ernest Greer         | Joia Johnson        | Jeffrey Tompkins |                     |
| Sheffield Hale       | Cynthia Jones-Parks | Felker Ward Jr.  |                     |

The prestigious Four Pillar Tribute annually recognizes an outstanding individual who demonstrates the ‘Four Pillars’ of leadership – Quality, Responsibility, Vision, and Integrity – and exemplifies the Council’s mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth. The Council for Quality Growth is proud to add Herman, Donata, Jerome, and Michael Russell to its list of Four Pillar Award recipients.

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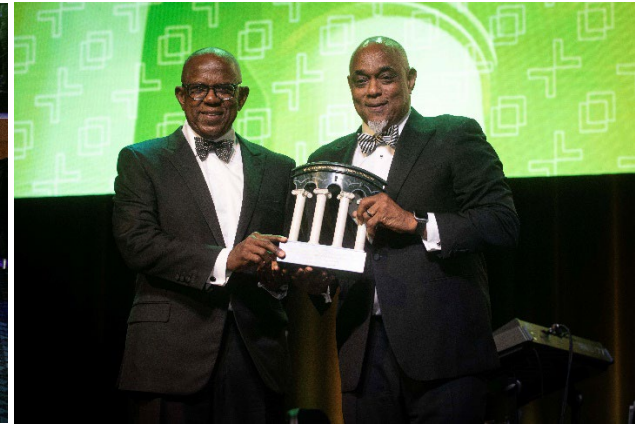


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*Top: Andre Dickens (left) and CeeLo Green (right); Middle: former Four Pillar Award recipients (left); Bottom: Jay Bailey (left) and Tuskegee University Golden Voices Choir (right)*

The recording and photos from the event will be posted to [www.FourPillarTribute.com](http://www.FourPillarTribute.com) as soon as they are available.

A digital program from the event can be downloaded here: <https://www.fourpillartribute.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FPT2024-Tribute-Program-FINAL.pdf>

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**About the Council’s Four Pillar Tribute:**

For 35 years, the Council for Quality Growth has paid tribute to an outstanding individual in the metro Atlanta region who exemplifies the Council’s mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth through an annual leadership tribute gala that recognizes the ‘Four Pillars’ of leadership – Quality, Responsibility, Vision, and Integrity.

The Four Pillar Award and Tribute is an unparalleled honor that allows the opportunity for the metro Atlanta region and State of Georgia to celebrate the recipient’s significant contributions to quality of life, community leadership, and economic development. The gala and award have come to be known as the highest honor bestowed for the contributions. The event provides a platform to align the honorees’ impacts on the region and the state with the Council’s ambitions and serves as a beacon of inspiration to perpetuate our economic prosperity. More information about the annual Four Pillar Tribute can be found at [www.FourPillarTribute.com](http://www.FourPillarTribute.com).

Past recipients of the Council’s Four Pillar Award include:

1990	Steve Reynolds	2002	George Busbee	2014	Steve Selig
1991	Wayne Shackelford	2003	F. Wayne Hill	2015	Dan Cathy
1992	J.W. Benefield	2004	Charlie Brown	2016	Jenny Pruitt
1993	D. Scott Hudgens	2005	Senator Johnny Isakson	2017	Governor Nathan Deal
1994	Wayne H. Mason	2006	John Wieland	2018	Paul Bowers
1995	Virgil R. Williams	2007	John A. Williams	2019	Larry Gellerstedt
1996	Paul A. Duke	2008	Tom Cousins	2020	Doug Hertz
1997	Jim Cowart	2009	Mayor Shirley Franklin	2021	Amb. Andrew J. Young
1998	J.D. Caswell	2010	Arthur M. Blank	2022	Carol B. Tomé
1999	A. Ray Weeks	2011	R. Charles Loudermilk, Sr.	2023	Ed Bastian
2000	Richard L. Tucker	2012	Sam Massell	2024	The H.J. Russell Family
2001	Louise Radloff	2013	John Portman		

**About the Council for Quality Growth:**

The Council for Quality Growth is a trade organization that works to ensure continued growth and economic success for generations to come by providing advocacy, information, and education to its members. For 39 years, the Council has been committed to the mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth and is proactively involved in the formulation of policy and legislation critical to the growth and development industry. The Council addresses, head-on, strategic economic planning, infrastructure needs, and tough quality-of-life issues throughout the metro Atlanta region and state. Visit [www.councilforqualitygrowth.org](http://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org) for more.

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