

**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:**

Monday, April 8, 2024

**The H.J. Russell Family Named 35<sup>th</sup> Recipient of Council for Quality Growth's Annual Four Pillar Award**  
*Donata, Jerome, Michael, and the Late Herman J. Russell Honored for Legacy Left on Atlanta*

ATLANTA, GEORGIA – The [Council for Quality Growth](https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org) will honor the H.J. Russell family on the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Four Pillar Tribute. Over its history, the prestigious Four Pillar Tribute has recognized outstanding individuals that have demonstrated great leadership while contributing to the high quality of life we have in metro Atlanta and Georgia. It is the first time the Council will honor the living legacy of a family with this special award and tribute. The Russell family, including family patriarch Herman J. Russell Sr. and his three children, Donata Russell Ross, H. Jerome Russell, and Michael Russell Sr., have spent two generations demonstrating the Council's 'Four Pillars' of leadership – Quality, Responsibility, Vision, and Integrity. The history of the Russell family is one that is embedded in the City of Atlanta and perfectly exemplifies the Council's mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth.

"You really can't tell the story of Atlanta without talking about Herman Russell," said Council for Quality Growth President & CEO, Michael Paris. "His entrepreneurial spirit helped build our city, his leadership inspired those around him, and his legacy continues to be part of the success our region celebrates today. We're looking forward to honoring his legacy carried on through Donata, Jerome, and Michael on this special 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Four Pillar Tribute."

The Council for Quality Growth will present Donata, Jerome, and Michael with this award during the [2024 Four Pillar Tribute](#), presented by Delta Air Lines, Georgia Power, and Norfolk Southern on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at the Georgia World Congress Center.



**DELTA** **Georgia Power** **NORFOLK SOUTHERN**

PRESENT THE  
COUNCIL FOR QUALITY GROWTH'S  
**2024 FOUR PILLAR TRIBUTE**  
HONORING  
*the legacy of*  
**HERMAN J. RUSSELL SR.**  
**& THE RUSSELL FAMILY**

**PURE GRIT**  
BUILT TO LAST

**35 Years**  
**FOUR PILLAR**  
QUALITY | RESPONSIBILITY | VISION | INTEGRITY  
**COUNCIL**  
for **QUALITY**  
**GROWTH**

OCTOBER 10, 2024 | 6:00 PM | GEORGIA WORLD CONGRESS CENTER | GEORGIA BALLROOM

-more-



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



**COUNCIL**  
for **QUALITY**  
**GROWTH**

**Media Contact:**

Kathryn Jones

Director, Membership & Marketing

[kj@councilforqualitygrowth.org](mailto:kj@councilforqualitygrowth.org)

770-813-3381

The theme of the 35<sup>th</sup> annual Four Pillar Tribute, chosen by the family, is *Pure Grit. Built to Last*. With pure grit, a vision to succeed, commitment to quality workmanship, responsibility to family and community, and uncompromising integrity, Mr. Russell created an empire that was built to last. He helped forever transform the Atlanta skyline with such projects as Coca-Cola Enterprises, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, luxury high-rise apartments, State Farm Arena, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium, to name a few. His tenacity and can-do spirit resulted in sound business practices that he instilled in his adult children. They have continued to grow their father's legacy to pass on to their children, grandchildren, and future generations.

"My father demanded honesty, commitment, and compassion from me and my siblings," said Donata Russell Ross. "We never, ever lose sight of these virtues and always seek opportunities to give back."

Today, Donata is CEO of Concessions International, which specializes in airport food and beverage concessions at many major U.S. airports, including Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest. For 40 years, Donata has grown Concessions International to operate 30 national and regional brands inside eight major airports, solidifying the company's reputation as one of the best in the industry. She attributes CI's success to its employees and strives for an unparalleled customer experience. Donata is inspired by her father's strength through adversity and commitment to giving back.

H. Jerome Russell is President of the Russell New Urban Development, the real estate development division of H.J. Russell & Company. He oversees the family's strategic direction and manages their expansive real estate portfolio. Jerome shares his father's entrepreneurial spirit and love for his community. He led the development of 504 Fair Street, now known as the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE), an economic engine in Atlanta that uplifts black businesses and creates jobs. "Herman Russell was a visionary who had compassion for his community," said Jerome. "The platform of relationships and businesses he's built allows this family to continue to create, enhance, innovate, and build enterprises into the future."

In 2003, Michael Russell Sr. succeeded his father as CEO of H.J. Russell & Company, the largest African-American owned real estate and construction business in the U.S. Michael has overseen a variety of innovative real estate projects in markets across Atlanta. Like his father, he's prioritized projects that contribute to the economic vitality of Atlanta and create equitable opportunities for its residents, specifically affordable and workforce housing and full urban redevelopment through mixed-used properties.

Following in his footsteps, all three of Mr. Russell's children have fully immersed themselves into the Atlanta community, serving on the boards of not just the family businesses, but also contributing to the work of the Herman J. Russell Foundation, the Georgia Historical Society, Central Atlanta Progress, Urban Land Institute, Atlanta Rotary, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Carter Center, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, the Georgia Research Alliance, AEC Unites, and 100 Black Men of Atlanta, among others.

"As we acknowledge the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his passing and celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> year since he founded Concessions International, this honor is for H.J." said Michael Russell Sr. "His business acumen, creativity, resilience and grit gave our family the foundation we needed to continue his legacy and blaze new trails."

In carrying on the traditions set by their father, the Russell family is laser-focused on uplifting the Atlanta community through their philanthropic efforts while preparing the next generation to continue the Russell legacy of building quality structures and communities that stand the test of time.

-more-



“Herman Russell is an iconic example of the opportunity Atlanta has to offer and someone who’s taken his successes and turned them into opportunities for others too,” said Sally Riker, 2024 Chair of the Council for Quality Growth. “That is true leadership, and we look forward to honoring his living legacy with the Four Pillar Tribute this year.”

The Council for Quality Growth commends the work of the Russell family, both past and present, that has contributed to Atlanta’s success story, making it a better place to live, to work, and to visit. The Council is incredibly proud to continue its annual tradition of recognizing extraordinary leaders in our region and state by adding the Russell family and the legacy of Herman J. Russell to the prestigious list of Four Pillar Award honorees. Sponsorship information is now available at [www.FourPillarTribute.com](http://www.FourPillarTribute.com).

**About the Four Pillar Tribute:**

For 35 years, the Council for Quality Growth has paid tribute to outstanding individuals in the metro Atlanta region who exemplify the Council’s mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth through an annual leadership tribute 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 tribute 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	
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.