



**AMERICA
WE THANK YOU**
An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

NEW JERSEY

**FACT
SHEET**

New Jersey was a staunch supporter of Near East Relief (NER), the American-led campaign that quickly sparked an international response with its unprecedented humanitarian endeavor, mobilizing all segments of American citizenry including elected officials, celebrities and laypersons alike, to help rescue victims of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey from 1915-1930.



Crippled children of the Belmont Avenue School, Newark, N. J., bringing precious gifts of food for the hungry children of Transcaucasia

Belmont Avenue school when the members of two classes for crippled children brought their donations. Hobbling on crutches or coming to school in wheelchairs, each child clasped a precious gift for the suffering children of Armenia.”

- New Jersey facilitated its relief efforts through its NER state headquarters located at Room 210 of the Chamber of Commerce Building in Newark.
 - *The New Near East*, NER's official publication, which boasted a readership of over 100,000 persons a month, told the story of the generosity of the schoolchildren of Newark who, on April 28, 1922, brought their donations of foodstuffs to be loaded on cargo ships headed to Armenia.
 - The story explained, “perhaps the most touching picture in Newark was seen at Belmont Avenue school when the members of two classes for crippled children brought their donations. Hobbling on crutches or coming to school in wheelchairs, each child clasped a precious gift for the suffering children of Armenia.”
- Also reported in *The New Near East* was the successful fundraising effort by members of the North Reformed Church of Newark who donated \$4,000 to NER, and the congregation of 100 people of the Calvary Baptist Church in Passaic who donated a cash gift of \$1,811.
 - As the need to care for the hundreds and thousands of rescued orphans in the Near East grew, U.S. President Warren Harding initiated an Emergency Committee of the NER tasked to amplify fundraising efforts for critical resources. In response to this appeal in 1922, a consolidated fundraising effort between residents of Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island yielded an additional \$10,000 gift. State representatives met at the auditorium of the missionary education movement in New York to set further fundraising initiatives to meet the Emergency Committee's needs.



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- In 1921, the *Newark Evening News* reported this poignant testimony from Julian Zelchenko who had visited Armenia and witnessed the deplorable conditions and suffering of the Armenians in the aftermath of the genocide perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey, which the NER was so desperately trying to alleviate.
- Zelchenko recounted, "We walked over dead bodies, saw naked children with horribly deformed bodies caused by starvation and disease, saw little boys and girls trying to appease their hunger by eating grass and manure, saw a widowed mother of four children, all under age, making toys, for which she earned 2,000 rubles a day - two cents in our money - living in a garret and only able to buy a pound of bread a day. We passed a group of fifty women a day. They were so weak from hunger that they could not brush the flies off their bodies. The people are dying on the streets by the hundreds. **And, oh, the gratitude of the people for what America is doing. Women kissed my hands and even my clothing when they learned I was from America. The greatest thing in Armenia is the American flag and the song I heard most frequently was 'My Country 'tis of Thee.'**"
- During the Children's Crusade in 1924, Jackie Coogan, Hollywood's first humanitarian, stopped in Newark, New Jersey, to collect milk, clothing and non-perishable food to be included in the million-dollar cargo of the ship he was "piloting" for the orphaned children of the Near East. Every school child in the United States was encouraged to participate in collecting donations and almost everyone who came to greet Jackie brought with them gifts—cans and cases of milk, boxes and packages of food and money. Jackie's tour received unprecedented media coverage in the U.S. through newspapers, movie magazines, and newsreels.

New Jersey, We Thank You!

Thanks to the generosity of the Near East Relief, its participating organizations and entities, the U.S. Government and State Governments, and especially the American people at large, over 1,000,000 refugees and 132,000 orphans of the Armenian Nation and other Christian minorities were rescued, fed, clothed, and educated. We have survived, thrived, and prospered from the horrors of Genocide at the hands of Ottoman Turkey.

For your unwavering support and unprecedented generosity in donating to Near East Relief's humanitarian efforts, New Jersey, We Thank You!



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