

# Hakki Akdeniz Honored as a 2022 Great Immigrant by Carnegie

*The Carnegie Corporation of New York celebrates 34 individuals from 32 countries as remarkable naturalized citizens of America*

NEW YORK CITY, UNITED STATES, July 27, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Hakki Akdeniz](#), a Turkish restaurateur, owner of New York's renowned Champion Pizza chain, and strong advocate for the homeless, recently received prestigious recognition as a [2022 Great Immigrants Recipient](#) by Carnegie Corporation.

Every Fourth of July, Carnegie Corporation of New York celebrates a group of remarkable Americans, all naturalized citizens, who have enriched and strengthened the nation through their contributions.

This year, the Corporation honored 34 individuals from 32 countries and a wide range of backgrounds, including local leaders who work in education, the arts, law enforcement, public service, health care, and small business ownership, as well as community-based advocates for education equity, climate change, food security, and programs for the homeless.

"I am truly honored to receive such esteemed recognition, and hope to inspire others through my achievements despite the circumstances in which I arrived here in America," said Akdeniz. "I believe that everyone, even the homeless, immigrants and less fortunate individuals, have the potential for greatness and can accomplish anything they put their heart into."

Hakki Akdeniz arrived in New York as a 21-year-old with \$240 and spent his first nights sleeping in Grand Central Terminal before living in the Bowery Mission's homeless shelter for more than three months. He worked in the kitchen there, and eventually found work in a pizza shop.

Today, Akdeniz is the owner of Champion Pizza, a New York-based chain with seven restaurants that regularly donates thousands of pizza slices, as well as clothing, blankets, and medicine, to homeless and hungry New Yorkers.





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Akdeniz, who is Kurdish and was born in Turkey, never forgot his start at the Bowery. He visits regularly to give food and has been known to tuck \$20 bills inside pizza boxes.

Over the years, he has also given jobs to unhoused people and immigrants, frequently advocating for those communities, and he has partnered with the Bowery Mission, Breaking Ground, City Relief, and other organizations.

“I started my journey in America as homeless, and through hope and resilience I have achieved many great things,” Akdeniz added. “I would tell anyone who is currently struggling that you are stronger than any battle you are going through. Every day is a brand new opportunity to start fresh and make progress towards your dreams.”

Akdeniz has received commendations from the city and the state, been featured in a Super Bowl ad, and has gone viral for his acrobatic moves “spinning flaming pizza.”

To view the full list of 2022 Great Immigrants, visit <https://www.carnegie.org/awards/great-immigrants/2022-great-immigrants/>.

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