



HAZLETON ELEMENTARY  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

# Castle Caller

SPRING EDITION 2025

## FUN TECH FACTS:

- The First computer mouse was made of wood, not plastic.
- Before iPhones, Apple patented a phone design shaped like an actual apple.
- Google receives more than 99,000 searches every second.
- Google's name was the fruit of a spelling mistake.
- The first video camera recorder was as big as a piano.

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## Coffee Cart

by Analis Guzman

Students from **Ms. Kunetz** 8th grade Autistic Support classroom have been selling coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and a variety of snacks on Fridays around 8am. These students are doing this to get practice with their social skills, money skills, and life skills and want your help. All staff from both elementary and middle school are able to buy from the coffee cart. The money raised goes towards the PTA. The students have been practicing hard and love sharing a warm drink and smile with you to brighten your morning!



Say hi to Jermaine, Jenny, Anthony, and Ramssett!!

## Escape the Vape

by Jaslyn Pena



"Cough Cough, I can't breathe!" Sterlen Barr sang to the middle school students at the Castle. Through music he recommended that we use this tactic to try and get others to stop smoking around us. He explained that we all have a right to breathe fresh air and those smoking around us need to be reminded that they are hurting our lungs.

He taught us that tobacco was the most used drug and showed us what drugs can do to our body if consumed. He grew up in a family where everyone smoked, some of his family members even died due to smoking. As Barr became an adult, he was determined not to let his kids suffer from drug use. Unfortunately, one of his kids did get influenced

by others in school. In frustration, Barr had a serious talk with him. His son, Sterlen Barr Jr. explained that many of his college friends vaped, and he got curious and tried the drug too. Realizing the dangers, he now helps his father in trying to minimize drug consumption. During their presentation, he (pictured below) sang us a powerful song that he wrote "Escape the Vape" that related to his experiences. Please see **Rap** on page 3



# Read and Paint

by Castle Staff



Mounts read and paint in a parent engagement activity!

On April 8th, Title I sponsored a 6th grade parent engagement activity: Read and Paint with the Mounts. Jime Wimmer, an artist, author, illustrator, and professor at SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) discussed the writing and design process of her children's book, *Copernicus*. **Ms. Walker** then instructed step-by-step on how to create a painting based on the story. Parents were also given instructional booklets on ways to help their child at home on managing kids' technology and standardized testing. This event showcased the importance of literacy and the various ways it is incorporated into all subjects. **Miss. Marianne's** café crew even created cookies!



# Café Crew

by Esther Alcantara

Carnival Day!



*"The only way to do great work is to love what you do!"*  
~ Marianne Havrilla



The cafeteria at the castle is where we find our behind-the-scenes superheroes! But no need to worry, they are noticed and appreciated. The café crew (as they call themselves) play such an important role in keeping our school functioning. In addition to cleaning the café multiple times, they cook for and serve over 850 students plus teachers and staff every day!

Among all the various activities they do for the students, their Thanksgiving dinner is their favorite. They decorate the café and serve turkey with stuffing, mash potatoes, gravy, and corn, with a special pumpkin dessert. The café crew also

enjoys watching the kids dress up in pilgrim hats. They also held a carnival themed day. They played carnival themed music while they served corndogs, cheeseburgers, fries, popcorn, and slushes. They even had a clown making balloon animals.

**Marianne Havrilla** has been

the Cafeteria Manager at HASD for 19 years, and a total of 25 years employed by the school. She stated how the way they manage to serve so many children is through teamwork. She commented that she has an awesome staff and that they all work together to accomplish all the great things they do for the students. Miss. Marianne mentioned that it is also rewarding when she is out in public and she is remembered by past and present students who comment on fun things the café crew supplied for them. The café crew deserve equal admiration and politeness as all other staff. They show respect towards us, so we should do the same for them. Be sure to be polite, say hello and thank you to show your appreciation for the hard work they do!



# Rap

(continued from front page)

One of the most exciting parts of the assembly was when Barr asked for volunteers who could dance. He then invited some of those students and teachers to the stage. They formed a big line and learned some dance moves. Then, they made a dance circle in which some students went in the middle and showed off their freestyle moves. Barr then explained that if they used tobacco products, in time, they wouldn't be able to do that. So, keep your lungs healthy and dance.

This program was great and focused on telling us the truth, "The Unfiltered Facts," about the harmful effects of tobacco and all its deceitful electronic and tobacco products. They also explained and

warned us to watch out for the misleading marketing practices of the tobacco industry. The tobacco industry's marketing and advertising unfortunately do a good job of getting youth and young adults hooked or addicted. We need to be aware of these strategies so we don't fall for it.

Sterlen Barr and his crew also have programs for: Nutrition and Fitness, Anti-bullying and Anti-violence, Drug and Alcohol Prevention. If interested, you can learn more on their website:

[www.nopuffdaddy.com](http://www.nopuffdaddy.com). And remember when someone is smoking near you, don't be afraid to use their tactic... "Cough, cough, I can't breathe!"



Above: Sterlen Barr explains the negatives of vaping.

Below: He gets the dancers lined up and ready to move.



**"If you vape, you won't be able to move to the music without coughing, and you want to be able to move to the flow!"**

~ Oliver Garcia

# Winter Sports

By Jaslyn Pena

**Fun Fact: Darlin #22 and Brian #14 jersey numbers match their birthdays!**



**Brailin's favorite player is Michael Jordan, Brian's is LeBron James! We polled middle school for their fav: 61% LeBron, 39% Jordan**



**"Every player to a satisfactory degree made evident and great improvements by the end of the season. I am one happy coach!"**  
~ Coach Silva



Middle school students have a few choices when it comes to sports over the winter. Basketball and cheerleading are a big hit within our school, but our district also provides wrestling. If you would like to participate in any of the winter sports, tryouts are usually around November. Then the season starts in December and finishes in February.

## Girls Basketball

Basketball is different from other school sports because each Hazleton middle school has its own team. You are not paired up with other schools inside the district, instead you play against them. This past year the HEMS Girls Basketball team had 15 girls, six 8th graders and nine 7th graders. They ended the season with 8 wins and 8 losses. Every time the girls won a game they would scream "Who won, we did!" in the locker room. We interviewed both captains **Jacelyn Pena (#20)** and **Ranngibel Polanco (#21)** as well as other basketball players including **Lorett Soriano (#5)** and **Blankismarye Read Colon (#12)**. We learned that Blankismarye's and Ranngibel's jersey numbers have interesting

meaning to them. Blankismarye's jersey number is important for her because of her favorite player Juju Watkins. She admires Watkins because of her incredible ball control and ball handling during tuff moments. Ranngibel's jersey number is important to her because sadly that's the day her aunt died. She views it as a tribute to her aunt. We asked Lorett who her favorite basketball player was. Instead of mentioning a pro player she explained that it was her best friend, Ashley Anziani (#14). She also shared that her favorite moment of the season was when the girls had their Pizza Party. Jacelyn Pena summarized her thoughts on the season: "This season was very inspiring, and it was a good experience working with the 8th graders. They taught me a lot of things. I hope kids next year learn from and look up to me."

## Boys Basketball

This 2024-2025 season, the boys' basketball team had 15 members, thirteen 8th graders and two 7th graders. The boys won 10 games and lost 8. They did make it to playoffs but sadly lost in the semifinals. The boys' coach, Mr. Silva, expressed his happiness for the players' improvement. He com-

mented that it was a season of many ups and downs, but the improvement shown by every player on the team from open gym to the first day of practice to the semifinal game brought him much happiness. The boys we interviewed had very sentimental and memorable moments this season. **Brailin Herrera (#15)** said that his most memorable moment was supporting and cheering for his teammates. **Axtel's Nunez (#23)** most memorable moment was when he scored his first point this season. **Brian Nolasco's (#14)** was when he played for the first time. And **Darlin De La Cruz's (#22)** most memorable moment was winning for the first time. Most of the boys were mature when asked about the games they lost. Brian did mention feeling sad. He said they worked very hard to win, and that he still pushed through and kept working hard like the rest of the team. All the players encourage kids from 6th and 7th grade to try out for the team next year.



# Determination

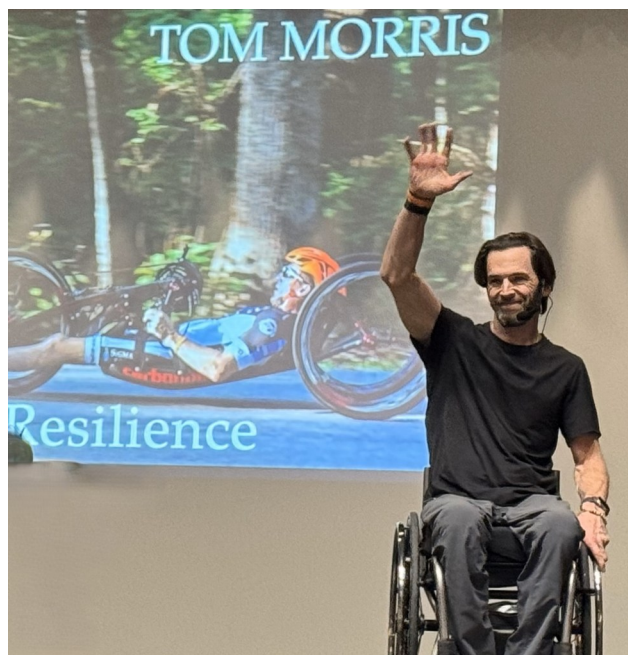
by Valerya Nespolino Moreta

Have you ever felt as if you should give up? Motivational speaker, Tom Morris, shared his story on the 4th of February at the Hazleton Elementary Middle School. Although his story contained hardships it was one of resilience. Tom Morris showed how having a positive mindset can help you through anything. Having confidence in yourself and a positive attitude is key. Tom Morris shared how his life took a severe change when a mountain bike riding accident left him paralyzed from the chest down. Morris had multiple moments where he could have given up and let his accident define him, but he chose to fight through it. He discussed how a positive mindset is a huge factor in overcoming any negative way his situation is viewed. Although he got frustrated and angry in many moments, his overall positive attitude led him to see the future that was waiting for him.

Morris made other great points as well. For example, he discussed

how important sleep is for us. He shared on the projection screen statistics about sleep. He said 60% of middle school students do not get the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep. He explained that students who get fewer than 7 hours of sleep per night are twice as likely to struggle in school. Also, students are three times more likely to experience symptoms of depression when not getting enough sleep. His advice on getting enough sleep needs to be taken more seriously by students.

On his website, [tommorrisperformance.com](http://tommorrisperformance.com), he offers a course designed to help others gain the skills needed to handle life's changes. On this site he says, "I'm here to equip you with the skills to not just handle change but also embrace it as an incredible opportunity to become the best version of yourself." His advice is an inspiration and teaches us that we can thrive in any situation, even when things seem impossible. The word "can" will give hope even in the



**Tom Morris talks to students about overcoming hardships and making positive changes in their life.**

toughest situations. We also learned that we should be grateful for what we have as our life can take a drastic turn when you least expect it.

Currently Tom Morris is the Assistant Athletic Director for High Performance at Penn State University. This shows how much he has grown by having a positive attitude. He never gave up even when it seemed impossible for him to thrive. He may have lost his ability to walk and ride a traditional bike, but he has not allowed that to define him. He has found other ways to enjoy the things he loves. And he is doing these things very successfully. We are proud to have had Mr. Morris at our school and wish him the best in his adventures of making a positive impact on others.

**"Very inspirational!"**

~ Dr. Scarcella



Castle Cheerleaders show their support to the H.S. Varsity Competition Cheer Squad competing in nationals in Disney. In a video they said: HEMS is crazy for Hazy...Good Luck at Nationals!





**Mootilda is growing up! Check out her blanket!**

**We asked middle school students which school they would like to attend:**

**STEM - 17%**

**Arts & Humanities - 12%**

**Career Center - 28%**

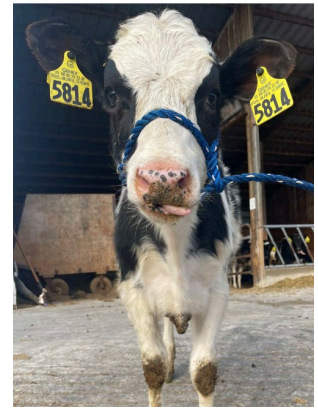
**High School - 26%**

**Undecided - 17%**

## Mootilda Update! by Criscany Diaz

I'm sure all of you remember our friend Mootilda the Mootainer that Mrs. Bruno's third grade class adopted, right? Well, in our last update, Mootilda was about 6 months old, 46 inches tall, and weighed around 420 pounds. When Mootilda gets old enough, she will be a milking cow. She will

get milked by a robot milking system. Cows love to be milked. She will walk up to the robot and get milked up to 6 times per day for about 5 to 10 minutes each time. One day, when she joins the milking herd, you could be eating yogurt or cheese made from her milk. Isn't that cool?



## High School Choices by Criscany Diaz and Esther Alcantara

When students are in 8th grade, they need to choose which high school they would like to spend the next 4 years of their life preparing for their future. Though it may be tedious, it's a very important decision. This article will help to better inform students and prepare them to make that decision! HASD offers a variety of program studies depending on student interests and what they would like to do in the future. High School choices include:

**Hazleton Area Academy of Science (STEM):** This high school is mostly specialized in software development, mechanical engineering, and computer science. It's classes include life science topics like genetics, botany, zoology, and ecology. It offers a variety of different learning opportunities including project-based learning, individual or group work, and many other creative ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge in a way they would be most comfortable. After attending this high school, students would be ready to specialize in fields such as biotechnology, biochemistry, or any job that uses analytical skills and a strong foundation of math or science. To apply for this high school, you must complete an online test, maintain a strong academic record in your math and science grades, and possibly get teachers recommendations.

**Hazleton Area Arts & Humanities Academy (HAAH):** This is

one of our most creative high schools. It is a specialized program for students looking forward to arts education or college and career presentations. The HAAH program showcases individual students' creative spirits. It allows students to shine academically through their artistic talents. Categories for placement include: Visual Arts, Drama, Dance, Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, and Communication Arts. To apply to any of these studios students need to submit an application and audition.

**Hazleton Area Career Center (HACC):** This is a specialized school that helps students learn and be college/career ready. It also gives students a chance to earn college credits. The HACC offers 18 approved programs designed to prepare students for both college and career paths. These programs include: Auto Technology, Broadcast Communications, Child Care, Collision Repair Tech, Computer Aided Drafting (CAD), Construction Tech, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Dental Assistant, Diesel Tech, Electrical Tech, Computer Systems Networking, Health Careers, HVAC, Law Enforcement, Nurse Assistant, Precision Machine Tech, and Welding Tech. To enroll in a HACC program, students must complete the Hazleton Area School District's

online registration process.

**Hazleton Area High School (HAHS):** This is the traditional high school that offers traditional classes and a variety of elective classes. Students also have the opportunity to take dual enrollment operations, which are college-level classes that can be taken while still in high school to earn college credits toward a certain degree. Some other classes offered include Honors Psychology, Honors Sociology, and Honors Statistics, along with many other elective courses like the African American History and the French Revolution. Students will automatically be placed in this school if you are not accepted into any of the above schools.

In Hazleton, students are lucky to have these high school options. Note that the above info was taken from the school's website: [www.hasdk12.org](http://www.hasdk12.org).

Also, if students are interested in sports, they may join the high school sports teams regardless of which school they attend. It's never too soon for students to start thinking about which school they would like to go to. Regardless, students should behave and try to get good grades because maybe they'll want to apply to one of the schools that has those requirements.

# Book Buddies

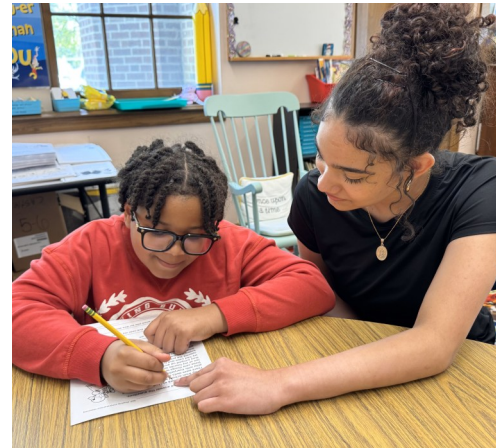
by Jaslyn Pena

The book club of the castle deserves some recognition. As expected, Book club does read novels. Members of the Book club are able to choose the novels they would like to read. They discuss what they are reading with others, and they can also share their perspectives of the book. Book club is a great club if you want to improve your social skills. This club involves more than you may realize. In addition to reading and discussing novels, they can be part of a neat program called Book Buddies. The club advisor, Mrs. Dudeck, provided us with some great information:

*The goal of our HEMS Book Buddies Program is to pair elementary students with middle school students to foster a love of reading. The program runs from October through March, with middle school students volunteering during one class per week. (Note-Our middle school members are responsible for mak-*

*ing up work they missed during the class that was missed.) This year the following eight students volunteered: **Jaslyn Pena, Criscany Diaz, Celinee Lora, Marilenny Garcia, Drianna Medina, Crisleidy Sanchez, Betsabe Cruz, and Franchely Cabrera Castillo.** Peer mentoring has many benefits for all involved. For our younger students, working with a middle schooler helps build reading fluency skills and comprehension. Younger students find middle schoolers relatable and look up to them as role models. The -to-one additional practice helps the younger students to build confidence in their reading and writing capabilities.*

*Peer mentoring is rewarding for our middle school volunteers, as well. There is a great sense of self-satisfaction when helping others. Our volunteers develop useful problem-solving skills, acquire leadership techniques, and enhance their communication skills. Volunteers form close bonds with the younger students. Overall, the experience*



*leads to a stronger school community and a deep sense of pride.*

In the book club, you can build strong friendships with some of the 3rd graders through book buddies, and you can also make new friends through discussing novels. Maybe you'll be able to find someone that has the same interests and way of thinking as you do. If this sounds interesting to you, sign up for the Book Club next year!

## Would You Rather?

Middle School Results are in!

Would you rather...

Fight 10 duck-sized horses or 1 horse-sized duck?

10 duck-sized horses - 106, **1 horse-sized duck** - 115

Have the ability to fly or read minds?

Fly - 77, **Read minds** - 143

Eat a cooked frog or cooked snake?

**Frog** - 123, Snake - 95

Carry a flip phone or only use a desktop computer?

Flip phone - 93, **Desktop computer** - 128

Suddenly burst into song or randomly break into dance moves throughout the day?

**Song** - 166, Dance - 55

Give up air conditioning and heating for the rest of your life or give up the internet for the rest of your life?

**Air conditioning and heating** - 152, Internet - 69

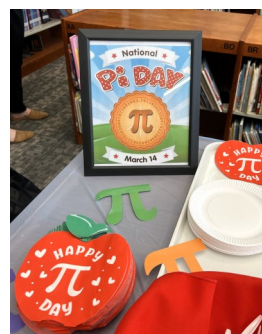
Have unlimited battery life on all your devices or have free Wi-Fi wherever you go?

Unlimited battery life - 75, **Free Wi-Fi** - 147

## Pi Day

by Castle Staff

Title I held a parent engagement event for the fifth grade students to celebrate Pi Day. Those that attended did several activities to celebrate the number pi, including making bracelets and eating pies made by **Miss. Marianne** and her cafeteria staff. **Mrs. Chyko**, the school librarian, read Happy Pi Day to You by Dr. Seuss.

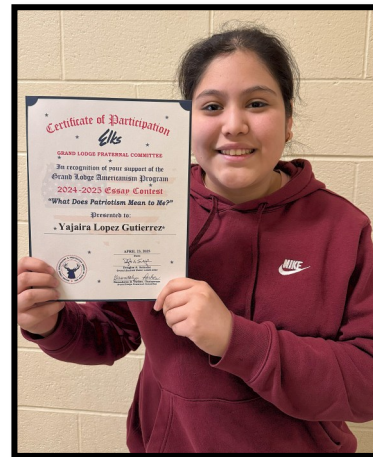


# Spotlight!

by Analis Guzman

Shout out to **Yahaira Lopez** for winning 3rd place in the 2024-2025 Elks Lodge Northeast District Americanism Essay contest. The topic of the Essay was "What does patriotism mean to me?" In this essay Yahaira explains that patriotism means loving your country and showing respect through actions and not just celebrating the holidays of our country. Yahaira believes patriotism involves being grateful for the freedom that we have, helping others in the community, and respecting people's different opinions. She emphasizes the small acts of kindness and working together that can make the country better. Yahaira's essay showed that to her, patriotism meant caring about her country and the people in it. The judging criteria for the competition were 30 points for avoiding the use of trite or worn-

out words and phrases, 40 points for staying focused on ideas and thoughts, 30 points for proper spelling, grammar and punctuation. The contest starts with the local lodges (ours being Hazleton Elks Lodge 200), progresses through district and state levels, and ends with the naming of our national winners at the grand lodge session in Kansas City, Missouri in July 2025. This contest gave students in four different grade levels 5-8 the opportunity to evaluate and express their views on the selected annual theme. This contest is important to Elks as it promotes Americanism to our local communities. It also encourages 10-13-year-olds students like Yahaira to thoughtfully consider American values and appreciate the blessings and responsibilities of citizenship.



**Congrats to Yahaira!**

## Read Across America

by Valerya Nespolino Moreta



Eighth grader, Brian Nolasco Espinal, as Cat in the Hat!

This year, Read Across America was a great time at the Castle with a Dr. Seuss-themed week from March 3rd to 7th. Annually, Hazleton Elementary Middle School's PTA has helped students find a love in reading with this program, Read Across America. The program, coinciding with Dr. Seuss's birthday, helps build a love for reading with activities such as having guest readers read to the elementary classes. Students had a special visit from The Cat in the Hat, **Brian Nolasco Espinal**, an eighth grader at the Castle. They even received treat bags with Dr. Seuss erasers, pencils, and bookmarks. On Tuesday, March 4th the school had a parent engagement activity called Book and a Bagel!

During this event all 4th

grade students received a new book alongside a bagel breakfast. Students got to read their new book with their parents/guardians and had a chance to answer Dr. Seuss trivia. **Mari- anne Havrilla** and her creative café crew provided a Dr. Seuss themed breakfast. Everyone had a joyous morning! On Thursday, March 6th guest readers from the community visited and read to all the elementary classrooms. The school had guest readers from the HAHS Spirt Club - The Cougar Crazyes (virtually via Teams), WNEP-16, Froggy 101, Penn State University, the Luzerne County Judge, the Mayor, and many more. These incredible guest readers were rewarded with a catered brunch as a thank you for reading. It was a great week at the Castle!



# Castle Scrapbook



3rd and 4th grade parent engagement magic show with Joe Ramono!



Music in our Schools Month (MIOSM) Chorus members. London Pimentel, a 6th grader, was chosen to sing a solo!



Cris Johnson and The Goofy Kooky Math Magic Show, Title I Parent Engagement Event



Mrs. Badamo class created the phases of the moon with Oreo cookies!



3rd Grade on the 100th day of school!



## Shout Out!

The third and fourth grade students in **Ms. Astorino's** English Language Development classes at Hazleton Elementary/Middle School initiated a community service project where they collected items for the Hazleton Animal Shelter to be donated for the holiday season. The classes, along with help from the rest of the school, collected dog and cat food, dog and cat treats, toys, and blankets for the shelter animals. Pictured from left to right are **Rarsherlin Arias Mercedes, Natalia Lopez Rodriguez, Anely Morales Peralta, Jesmely De Jesus Beltre, Arlenny Mercedes Acosta, and Ashley Goris Grullon.**



## Shout Out!

Students from Ms. Walker's art classes, grades 3-5, participated in a design contest for Work Zone Safety Awareness for the month of April. Assistant Highway Safety Education Coordinator, Kerri Kline, from the Luzerne County District Attorney's office, visited HEMS. During her visit, Ms. Kline presented students with certificates and ribbons as awards for their Traffic Safety Cone artwork. Three students from each grade level were chosen for their creative designs. Great Job!



## Puzzles For You!

### Sudoku Rules:

- Every row needs each # 1-9
- Every column needs each # 1-9
- Every nine-square box needs each # 1-9

	6				3		8	4
					4			6
	8	4		9				
	2	6	8		5			7
		1				4		
4			7		1	8	6	
				7		2	1	
7			9					
9	1		4				3	



## Spring Word Search

T	M	O	X	Q	O	C	A	T	A	P	M
P	M	H	P	Q	D	A	K	O	L	S	A
L	I	O	B	T	W	L	A	I	G	I	W
A	N	I	D	I	H	F	A	G	B	J	G
N	U	O	C	I	N	E	S	N	M	B	
T	J	I	F	I	S	H	H	Z	O	M	W
Z	K	Y	S	R	R	U	K	V	F	I	N
M	D	R	A	I	N	I	V	W	Q	W	L
J	A	M	I	K	F	R	S	M	A	R	X
K	O	Z	L	E	A	F	W	F	X	Z	Y
D	Z	M	R	D	C	M	J	L	Q	E	B
I	R	B	L	Y	K	U	O	B	N	E	H

Calf

Iris

Rain

Eggs

Leaf

Snail

Fawn

Plant

Soil



## The Castle Caller Staff

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