25-02-07 TheBuzz web Mixdown 2

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SPEAKERS

Samantha Larned, NPR promo, Nicole Cox, Michael Dauphinais, Zac Ziegler, Paola Rodriguez, Christopher Conover, Arianna Brocious



Michael Dauphinais 00:00 Following is an azpm original production.



Christopher Conover 00:09

Welcome to The Buzz. I'm Christopher Conover, this week, our 300th episode. The buzz made its debut on August 3 2018 with an episode on education issues ahead of the new school year. The first handful of episodes were podcast only, and the show made its on air debut later that month. Since then, we've run the gamut on show topics, the people we've talked to and the places we've gone. We've traveled with people by land, air and water, spoken with a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, notable thinkers and academics and the people affected by the headlines we all read. Joining me in the studio to celebrate our 300th episode. Are the show's originating and current producer, Zac Ziegler, Ariana Brocius, who produced more than 100 episodes of the show and is now with climate one. And Paola Rodriguez who produces the show when Zac or I need a week off, or, as often happens, when she's got a great idea for an episode. Welcome everyone.

Zac Ziegler 01:27 Thank you.

Arianna Brocious 01:28 Happy to be here.



Paola Rodriguez 01:29

Happy to be here.

Christopher Conover 01:30

All right, Zac, let me start with you. You and I were tasked with putting this show together in 2018 What do you remember about that early talk and how this show came to be?

Zac Ziegler 01:43

First thing I remember was when you and I started, everyone else in the newsroom said no, except us. So we got handed the show was kind of nice. No, it was, I mean, the first idea was something more along the lines of Fresh Air, like one long interview, and then you and I, as often happens with us, got a little overly ambitious, and we're like, No, we're gonna do like a fully produced show. It's gonna sound like the daily every week. And we eventually, kind of settled into what ended up becoming this show, you know, a few interviews, maybe produce shows every now and again, and trying to get out and talk to people when we can.



Christopher Conover 02:18

And just one topic, but a big, deep dive on it.

Zac Ziegler 02:21 Yeah.



Christopher Conover 02:22

So Ariana Zac was only here for about a dozen episodes after we'd spent months trying to figure out what the show would be. And then you stepped in as the producer. It was still young. The concrete definitely had not set. I'm still not sure it's fully set. What do you remember about stepping in and the show, as it has with other people have produced it, it changed when you came in in a good way.

Arianna Brocious 02:50

I was really excited to get the chance to have a weekly show, to be able to explore all kinds of issues that were affecting people in southern Arizona. I had recently moved back to Tucson, and felt like there was a lot I needed to learn, and a lot I wanted to sort of bring to listeners. I really believe in this idea that when people know and understand what's happening, they can be more engaged and more I don't know responsible people in the world take a bigger part in what's happening. So I really wanted to explore, I don't know, all kinds of things like environment and politics and schools, and we did it. We did an episode on school lunches. I

remember that one. And also it's a challenge every week to come up with a show, and you have a full newsroom, and at that time, all of us had other jobs as well. So I remember it was kind of stressful.

Christopher Conover 03:38

It was kind of stressful. And, you know, he said it was a challenge to come up with a show topic every week. I remember when this show was first put on the table, one of my first thoughts was, okay, we'll need to do probably 50 shows a year. Do I have 50 good ideas? And the answer is, No, I don't, but let alone years worth of ideas. And that's where the listeners who occasionally suggest stuff and the producers have been so important to this show.

Zac Ziegler 04:11

Well and topics evolve too. You mentioned school lunches. We did a show on the topic of school lunches again a few weeks ago.



Arianna Brocious 04:20

Yeah. I listened to it.



Zac Ziegler 04:21

Yeah, there's a bill in the legislature that could remove certain food additives from school lunches. So yeah, these things they they have a way of coming back on themselves.

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Christopher Conover 04:32

And the fun part of that was one of the people we interviewed on that episode, Ariana, you and I interviewed on the first school lunch episode a couple of years ago, so things don't go away. Paola, you're sitting on the other side of the glass in radio terms, but you step in now and again whenever Zac or I need some time off or are busy with another assignment, or you suggest to us what turns out to be a really good idea, which I'm afraid sometimes you regret, because we're like, Oh, good, let's make it a half hour show. You're in charge. What do you try and bring when you're working on the show?

Paola Rodriguez 05:11

I don't know. I kind of put myself in like the listeners' shoes, like, who are the people that I would like to hear from the most? And for me, those are always going to be the people that are most directly affected by the issues. So, you know, if you take a look at some of the episodes that I've had a hand in, like tribal water rights and things like that, we're hearing directly from the tribes. And you know, a lot of the times those types of interviews, you know, it takes time to

get them, you know, we want to make sure that when we gain those trust from those people, that we give them a platform where they feel like they can speak their minds, and there's not a time constraint, right?

Christopher Conover 05:45

And that, I know you all have heard me say it, especially Zac and Ariana hundreds of times for every interview, I always tell people we're not looking for the perfect sound bite. It's just you and me having a conversation, which I think is kind of some of the magic of this show. We don't really care about the 13 second sound bite. We have a half hour to fill. So let's just talk.

Zac Ziegler 06:09

Yeah, 13 seconds is not enough. Time taken up if we if we want that, it's like, no, we need more from you. Come on.

Christopher Conover 06:16

That's exactly before we get too far into things. Ariana, you've been gone from the show for a couple of years now, but you're a familiar name to our listeners because you did over 100 episodes with us. What are you doing now?

A

Arianna Brocious 06:34

Currently, I am co host, editor and producer of a podcast and radio show called Climate One. We are on more than 80 public radio stations around the country, and we are a similar kind of show in that we really focus on quality conversation. We kind of consider ourselves like the magazine show for climate. We cover all kinds of things. We have like, you know, episodes on clothing, and we have episodes on how to electrify your house. And we have really wonky episodes on nuclear power or AI, and then we have these really heart centered, people focused episodes, kind of like what Paola was talking about, of environmental defenders and people who are kind of on the front lines of climate action. And so it's a great platform to explore all these different things, to bring people voices, not just around the country, but actually around the world, and it's been a great ride.

Christopher Conover 07:25

So putting your show together, Climate One, or putting The Buzz together, I'm going to throw it to the producers, even though I occasionally produce a show, but I don't get to produce that many of them. What are the easy parts and what are the hard parts of putting together this show, and especially Zac and Ariana, because you all have put the vast, vast majority of those shows together.

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I will always say that first edit is always so easy and you're just trimming out the stuff that you don't want in the show. Then man, that second edit, when we're cutting it down to technically, every show is 27 and a half minutes long. We have that 90 second break in the middle, and then a minute at the end, getting it to hit that time specifically, because you have a little leeway with what we call the bumper music. But for the most part, you're having to hit that time on the head. And it gets interesting. There are weeks where, you know, maybe we're a little short, and I will jokingly come to you and say, Okay, I rewrote the script. Everyone now has middle names, and they're all multi syllabic middle names.

Christopher Conover 08:31

You've also told me to read like John Wayne a couple of times.

Zac Ziegler 08:34

Yes, yes. That's another one that I'll go to. But, you know, there are times that man just going through and trimming everything out because we've got a lot of good stuff for a show, and I'm just going through and, like, nipping out every um and uh because I don't want to cut any of the content. Yeah, at this point, I'm pretty sure my wife knows that plans on Thursday night are not a thing, because there are times where I will be working well into the evening to get this show finished up.

Arianna Brocious 09:04

I definitely agree with that. And I would also say I think a challenge to a show that tries to encompass a lot is getting enough diverse perspectives every week. This is something we struggle with on Climate One, because we want to hear from all the different parties affected by whatever it is we're talking about. And some people are easier to get, some people are harder to get. And trying to sort of get the right blend of people, the voices that complement each other, but also represent different sides of an issue that's challenging. And then to Zac's point, yeah, making it fit the clock you have, trying to kind of maximize the great stuff, and it's, it's, it's hard to cut the good stuff when you have to cut for time. Paolo, what about you?

Paola Rodriguez 09:46

I have to agree with that point. But also add, I think for me, I put a lot of pressure on The Buzz to, you know, be different from other radio talk shows. A lot of the times we are already hearing from local news stations. You know, where they're bringing in politicians to hear from them. And I don't want the bus to be the same way. And so I really, when I'm looking at my pitches, in the beginning, I really try to think, what is a listener going to get different from this show versus from other shows?



Christopher Conover 10:17

You know one of the things we've all talked about we even talk about it in the newsroom Kind



of Ariana, going back to what you were saying, different voices as reporters, we all know there are certain people we can call who will always return our calls, who will always be available for us.

Zac Ziegler 10:36

Unavoidable for comment.

Christopher Conover 10:38

Yes, we had a former news director who referred to that as unavoidable for comment. It was a great phrase, and it's hard not to always use them, because they are always available. But I think we've tried on this show and in the newsroom, but really on this show to to get those other voices to at least reach out to them, and they don't always say yes, but we try.



Paola Rodriguez 11:04

But I want to add to that, Christopher, you know, we do try new ways in getting those voices right. We do buzz lives. We do listening sessions. We're doing innovative approaches, like the one episode with the mayor, where you all were on the street car or in the car, talking about local issues. I mean, you're bringing listeners to the show, which is a thing that not a lot of places do.

Christopher Conover 11:28

That's true. And you brought up one of my favorite parts of doing this, and Ariana and I did the first one, and that was the buzz live, taking the show, not just out of the studio, which we'll do for interviews, but we put it in front of a live audience in Bisbee.

Arianna Brocious 11:45

That was one of the most fun events ever. I mean, I really that was an idea where we thought, you know, this is an issue about we wanted to explore the San Pedro River. The San Pedro river is in Cochise County, you know, and we needed to go there, to be on the ground with people who are most close to the river, who care about it, who are affected by it. And so yeah, we had this great show at the Bisbee Royale theater with a lot of people, and that was one of the first times where I really felt the power of a live audience and just the sort of dynamic energy in the room where there were a lot of people who really cared about this issue. And it was great. It was a really powerful night.



Christopher Conover 12:27

It really was. And I have so many fun memories of that, not the least of which was you and I found a French bakery across the street. Delicious. It was delicious, but it was just yeah, the

power of looking out and seeing the audience and taking their questions. It was amazing.

Arianna Brocious 12:46

Well, we did that one, and then we did one on gentrification at the Dunbar, yeah, and that was similar, and that was a sold out house. I mean, that's a much bigger venue that's here in Tucson, and we really filled the room. And I think because it's a hot button issue then and now, but again, it was really encouraging to see how many people were there who wanted their questions answered, who wanted to engage, who wanted to sort of hear what these people on stage had to say. And I think that's the work that we do. That's the platform that the buzz offers, and shows like climate one, where there's just a place for people to come and connect on these issues.

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Christopher Conover 13:23

And I think one of the things that you and I learned when we were doing those Ariana, was take the issue to the people. Have you know we did the San Pedro River in Bisbee, we were talking about gentrification at the Dunbar, not in the studio or on the campus of the University. We took it to the people Zac you and I did that also a water, another water issue in Cochise County. We took it down there, but it was a a little more tense, yeah,

Zac Ziegler 13:55

yeah, that, that episode that we did at Cochise College down in Douglas, about the AMA down there, and also talking about the failed ama that didn't happen in Willcox that is now being forced in by the State Department of Water Resources. And I remember when we were putting together that show and looking for venues, Cochise College said, yeah, you can rent our multi purpose room, but you need to have security like you have to hire off duty police officers, because the last time someone came down here and did this, it got really contentious, and we're worried about that. We did that, and I maybe it was a different crowd. Maybe it's just the power of allowing and bringing in all sides and all voices on an issue. But that that evening, I think, also went swimmingly well, there was a big thing that we had farmers and people from that side on the stage, so that when you know, someone gave kind of that technical explanation of why we need water regulation in this area, someone else could pipe in. And say, Here's how that would affect me. And I think doing something like that, that's part of good journalism.

Christopher Conover 15:06

And the deputy never got out of their car. It was very tense when we started, but everything was was good. You were listening to The Buzz. The conversation continues after the break. Stay with us.

NPR promo 15:23

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Christopher Conover 15:39

Welcome back to The Buzz. I'm Christopher Conover. This is the 300th episode of the buzz. So we're talking about what goes into making a show. But before we do that, a quick voice memo sent to us by former production assistant Samantha Larned.



Samantha Larned 15:56

I think that working on the buzz is one of the most valuable experiences I could have had as a young reporter, not only because of what we covered, but how we went about that. There's always this sense that if you've wondered about something, then someone else has too some of my favorite episodes we've ever done came from casual questions or observations. Our former producer pointing out that Arizona beer Week is coming up. Our host discovering my lifelong love of bats, wondering what Ban the Box efforts there are in southern Arizona asking what movie production looks like in the state after old Tucson reopened, why did the city stop recycling glass? Everything has a story. You just need to know who to talk to. There are a lot of things that I take away from my time working on the buzz, including an appreciation of enter the haggis. But there are two phrases that I still find myself using in interviews consistently. The first one comes at the beginning. It breaks the ice and helps put people at ease, especially if they're not used to being interviewed. This one's usually not included in the final episode, and that's we don't bite unless you're an elected official and the other listeners are probably familiar with comes at the end of the interview. Thanks for spending some time with us.

Christopher Conover 17:12

That was Samantha Larned, who now works at Texas Tech Public Media in Lubbock. Now we head back to our round table with myself, current producer Zac Ziegler, former producer Ariana Brocious, and fill in producer Paola Rodriguez, we're about to dive into some of our favorite episodes. Ariana leads us off.

Arianna Brocious 17:33

Well, there's a couple, I think one that we had a lot of fun producing was on the Bisbee science lab. Again, this was one where we got to go outside the studio. We went out into the community, and Bisbee was just really leading the way in creating this very cool STEM center right on Main Street in Bisbee. We did kind of a field piece interview there, and it was great. It was a really enjoyable day to get out and talk to people, and also to see kind of how this piece of our community had had come together. I would say another thing we did, as part of the buzz in my memory is is really try to do more for local election coverage. So there was a year where we sent out surveys to all the candidates running for local elections which don't always get the attention that the statewide races do, right? And then we compiled all their answers with the help of our great web designer AC here at AZPM, and had this very cool interactive web page where people could come and explore the answers that all these politicians had shared, all these candidates had shared about how they felt about certain issues that were of importance to listeners. And so again, I think that is where the buzz shines. I think having a platform for really cool different kinds of engagement with different issues that affect local people is just is great.

Christopher Conover 18:57

Both of those were on my list for shows you and I did, and you and I did the first show on PFAs, which we're still doing shows on, and but one that stuck out a little bit in my mind, and I went back and actually re listened to part of it last night, was the cyclovia show, because we had the crazy idea of riding the route with one of the organizers. So we used a microphone on my bike and on on her bike, and then you really, as the producer, went above and beyond on that one. Because not only did you ride the route with us to make sure we were behaving, but you did it on one of the Tugo rental bikes, which are not the fastest I mean, they're good bikes. They do their job, but very heavy,

Arianna Brocious 18:58

They're heavy as it turns out, and slow. Meanwhile, you and our guests are on, you know, road bikes cruising ahead. Yeah, it was a challenge, but it was great. And again, just, you know, exploring what you can do with raid. That's one of the most fun things. It gets very portable.

Christopher Conover 20:02

And I think that actually set up one of my favorite adventure shows that Zac and I did. We'll call that an adventure show, because it was an adventure when we kayak the Verde River, and it was kind of the same thing. And I know, Zac, you were way more stressed about it than I was, because you have to put it together. And I was wearing a mic on my kayak, and the recorder was in a dry bag. Our guest was doing the same, and we just started the recording. I was like, Gee, I hope this works for three hours. And every once while you'd make us pull over and you'd open up the dry bags to make sure it was recording, in theory, but that was a great show.

Zac Ziegler 20:43

Oh, yeah, yeah, that one was paranoia inducing, absolutely. But then the edit, I mean, you know, talking about that like we did before, yeah, there was three plus hours of audio. I remember, when we got done, we recorded a long interview with with Doug von gossick, just in case every standing on the shore, right? Yeah, that paranoia. But I mean, getting to do stuff like that, that is, that's the cool part of this job. I always just think, too, if, like, when, when there's kind of an audible that gets called, or we have kind of a crazy idea, you know, writing around town with the mayoral candidates, I I remember going through about six or seven microphone

configurations one day to try and find one that would work. Well, we ended up settling on just good old lavalier microphones, but things like that, things like our wine episode that you and I and Paolo,



Christopher Conover 21:35

I think that was the first show Paula did with us.

Z

Zac Ziegler 21:37

Yeah, she she got to tag along on that, and Chad Preston just happened to walk up to where we were doing our first interview, and we just said, let's do the first half of our interview with you walking down back over to your tasting room. And that turned out great.

Christopher Conover 21:52

And we walked by the museum that was playing music. So now we had to deal with external music during the interview as we were walking, yeah, these are the things that people don't know that Zac and Ariana and Paola have to deal with when we have bad ideas. Yeah.

Zac Ziegler 22:10

And the last ones that that stand out from an impact standpoint, in my brain has been working with Paula on the coverage of the Tom Meixner shooting. Those shows were, were very powerful to work on, and really had a lot of depth to them. And that that was, that was when I knew that I was going to feel perfectly safe whenever I went on vacation handing this show off to Paola.

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Christopher Conover 22:36

Thinking about a couple of those shows, Paula, the one that always stands out to me is when we got the message from the family. They called, they they didn't want to come on and do an interview, but they recorded a message for us. And it's still it was, it was amazing.

Paola Rodriguez 22:58

Yeah, that episode that was the one year after the tragic death of Thomas Meixner, and we were really trying to look at, how can we make our coverage different from every other news outlet, and how can we be intentional about what we're doing? And you know, Christopher, you and I, we were talking about this months before the one year, and what came up was we should do like a memory page. And that's how that idea started. And, you know, we started a hotline for people to call in and share their most treasured memories of Thomas Meixner. And I mean, I still, to this day, cry listening to those voicemails because the trust that we were able

to create within that community that was left feeling so unsupported was a different type of trust I don't know that I'll ever experience again in my career. I hope I do, but it was a very special episode.

Christopher Conover 24:03

It really, really was, yeah, I have this whole list of shows that pop to mind when I think about it. And one of my favorites, again, it was a show you and I did Ariana. Was the winter solstice show. We took the traditional Christmas show and through the Christmas out of it, and did all the other winter holidays. We still rerun that show occasionally in the winter. It was a fun show and super educational. I think for a lot of people, you know, we did Zac the first very early on. We did three opioid shows. I remember those, and we're still doing the opioid issue here in southern Arizona, and,

Arianna Brocious 24:49

well, I think that's a thing about a show like this, is that there's a lot of range, right? It the flexibility of both the format and the, I don't know, kind of the core mission of the show. Just. You explore a lot of things, serious, joyful, funny, everything in between.

Christopher Conover 25:05

That's been the amazing part. And occasionally I'll go back and look at shows and think, wow, that aged really well. And then those occasionally, well, that didn't age as well. We did a show. It was between producers, between you two. We did a show. There was this new thing coming to college athletics, name, image and likeness. And I remember we had a young football player from Sal Point High School here in Tucson. He was being recruited, I think he eventually went to UCLA. His dad had played in the NFL so knew the game, and I remember, I asked him, is n i I part of recruiting? He's like, Oh, no, no, no, the money thing, no. I mean, it's not real money. It's just a small amount, you know, now we have students getting paid. It's like NFL free agency, millions of dollars. I we talked to a former journalism school student who's a reporter now from the University, who was a student athlete here, and she was on the track team, and I remember asking her, would this have helped you? She said, Nah, we wouldn't have gotten any money. And now we have people you know at other universities, in the minor sports, if you will, who are also making scads of money. So that show didn't age as well as we thought it was going to. So as we start to wrap this up, I want to ask each of you what's your favorite story or factoid or trivia about the show that the listeners don't know.

Zac Ziegler 26:45

Oh, man, I'll lead off. I I almost threw up on a senior White House official when we did a show where we were touring around on a bus. I get motion sick. I did multiple hours riding facing forwards, backwards, sideways, focused on my attention on them, and they were intentionally going down some questionable roads to show why Tucson needed infrastructure money by the time we got off the bus, Christopher Conover 27:18

yeah. We had suntran bus, a city bus. Yeah,



Zac Ziegler 27:20

I had people pointing out the level of green that I was it was like a cartoon, but I managed to keep it together. I am proud of that to this day. Oh, man, I can think of one time where I called you about eight o'clock at night on a Thursday, and I realized I had flipped two words in a title of a place in a script, and I made you come back in here and remember the office, yeah, yeah, that. That was fun. Those are some of the ones that stand out in my brain is like, Oh man, that's that's the level we have to go to sometimes with these shows.



Christopher Conover 27:56 All right, Paola?

Paola Rodriguez 27:57

I would have to say for me, it was one of the first episodes when we were talking about the issues that was happening with safety on the University of Arizona campus, we had brought on one of the people that who were being harassed. And you know, the level of work that Zac put to make sure that person remained anonymous, was a type of level of thinking I would have never thought before where, you know, he went into the sound print of the sound and deleted things. So that way, if someone wanted to download it and revert it back to that person's voice, they wouldn't be able to.

Zac Ziegler 28:37

Yeah, there was, there was about a 10 step process in masking that voice



Christopher Conover 28:40

and the work you did on that kept them from sounding like a bad 1970s kidnapper movie. You did so much work that they kept a normal sounding voice. But if you played the two of them side by side, they're completely different, which was pretty amazing. I think for me, you know, things I remember the show we did on immigration in Germany. You know that show fell together, you know, I was over there on the Rios fellowship, and was trying to get interviews put together, and all of a sudden I was able to get the guy who wrote the EU immigration plan, and he was going to be home in Berlin for, I think it was six or eight hours, and I met him in a coffee shop, You know, and able to interview him, I found a Syrian refugee who had an amazing story, who was very reluctant to talk. And we, we met in a shawarma shop, but he wanted me to hide the microphone behind, like the condiments that people wouldn't see. And then I guess I should give the Easter egg of the. Show, one of the things that Zac, you and I, and Andrea



Kelly, who was news director at the time, had to do, and we struggled with, and it sounds so stupid and simple as the music, trying to find the right music for the show. And we'd gone all through what you and I refer to as the bad music library, and there wasn't anything there. And I remember, I was sitting at home with with headphones on, literally just going through

Zac Ziegler 30:26

we listened to easily, over 1000 songs.



Christopher Conover 30:28

Oh, easily, trying to find it. And I was sitting at home with my headphones on going through my own collections, like no, no, no, no, wait, that song works. What? Wait, I know this song. I mean, I was in my collection. Of course, I knew it. And I went back and I looked at it, and it was the instrumental version of a song from Enter the Haggis.



Zac Ziegler 30:50

I have to just point out people can actually hear that said now without I get three or four emails a year asking, What did he say that band name in is it Enter the Haggis? Yes, you heard that right. Having the music behind it didn't make it hard for you to hear.



Christopher Conover 31:08

And I looked at it, and I started to laugh. And I remember I brought it into the office in the morning and laid it down fly, better term, on the desk for you and Andrea. I was like, I found our music and and you said, Zac, oh yeah, it's great. It's got a an open, a middle and an end. That's perfect. What's it called? I said, Well, let's take it to Andrea. So we took it to Andrea, and she listened to it, and she liked it, and she said, what's it called? And I really didn't want to tell the two of you. And this is licensed by the band we, you know, paid for the rights for it, but the Easter egg is the name of the song. It's called, can't trust the news, and it makes me chuckle every week for over 300 episodes now, including repeats. So yeah, that's the great Easter egg in the show. Well, Zac, we don't want to talk much longer, because you as the producer of the show have to figure out how to make this all fit. So we will wrap it here.



Zac Ziegler 32:11

Like we all said, The toughest part of the job is squeezing it down into that time frame.



Christopher Conover 32:15

Paola as our newest staff member on the show. Thanks for joining us.

Paola Rodriguez 32:21 Thanks for having me.



Christopher Conover 32:23

Ariana, thanks for coming back in. It is so great to sit back in here with you again.



Arianna Brocious 32:27

It's great to be here. Thanks.



Christopher Conover 32:29

And that's The Buzz for this week. Tune in next week as we talk about the state of Arizona's schools with Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne. You can find all our episodes online@azpm.org and subscribe to our show wherever you get your podcasts. Just search for the buzz Arizona. We're also on the NPR app. Zac Ziegler is our producer, with production help from Maggie farmer, our music, as you heard, is by enter the haggis. I'm Christopher Conover, thanks for listening.



Nicole Cox 33:15

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