

## 'SeaWolf's' new spyglass earns its keep

By J. Henry Phillips

Special to *The Reader*

That fifty-cent pair of garage sale binoculars was just the thing for making out the tiny numbers on Excel charts and PowerPoint slides from the booth at the very back of the room. It was an awful feeling, however, on lowering the glasses, to see the entire Brazilian audience grinning back at the interpreter's booth like so many Cheshire cats. The cruel nickname "Sea Wolf" stuck like beach tar as I searched for a better solution. I was going to have to lose the binoculars or swap the booth for a U-boat conning tower. Opera glasses would look even sillier, so scratch that idea.

The solution turned out to be a Simmons monocular small enough to hide in your hand yet powerful enough to resolve the numbers and print on speaker presentations before you can say "next slide." You can use one eye, chameleon-like, to watch the stage and—by swiveling the spyglass—read

the speaker's lips with the other. No more flipping through printouts or squinting into the blurry distance. The magnification makes easy work of scanning the presentation just a little ahead of the speaker, thereby avoiding unpleasant surprises. Yet the tool is not without its drawbacks: I once caught a colleague tripping over terminology while using the instrument—but only because he was zooming in on a gorgeous member of the audience instead of paying attention to the speaker. All in all, however, the monocular yields a pretty good return on a \$10 investment.

An added bonus is the ability to read faraway street signs in unfamiliar towns. Bus drivers in South America will not stop unless you begin waving while the vehicle is still a dot on the horizon -- a dot the natives instantly recognize by its size, shape and color. A monocular makes it possible to read bus identifiers in time to flag it down. Rarely will the interpreter find a quality-improvement tool as cheap, small



or light. A monocular will earn its keep without crowding your bag of tricks or weighing you down with ballast. —

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## TAHIT advancing health interpreter issues

Yacovone, Diaz staying busy with Texas Association of Healthcare Interpreters and Translators

By Tricia Yacovone

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The Texas Association for Healthcare Interpreters and Translators (TAHIT) is on the way to achieving one of its primary goals: promoting the use of qualified healthcare interpreters.

Last fall, TAHIT founder and AATIA member **Tricia Yacovone** met with State Rep. Jack Stick and his opponent, candidate Mark Strama, both of whom expressed interest in the goal.

After the election, Ms. Yacovone and AATIA president **Esther Díaz** met with Representative-elect Strama and one of his aides to outline the

need for more qualified healthcare and social service interpreters, the population that would be impacted by such a change in Texas and the precedents set in other states for similar legislation.

Rep.-elect Strama demonstrated much enthusiasm for the idea, and offered to sponsor a bill after taking the oath of office in January.

Strama also paved the way for Ms. Díaz and Ms. Yacovone to contact State Sen. Rodney Ellis, who proposed SB 1615 during the last legislative session regarding an interpreter services pilot program for Medicaid recipients, and State Sen. Kyle Janek, MD, a physician and

vice chairman of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

Ms. Díaz and Ms. Yacovone met with an aide to Senator Janek, and Ms. Yacovone met with the general counsel and chief of staff to Senator Ellis.

Plans are developing for contacting more legislators and members of the medical and insurance industries to gauge their response to and support for the legislation.

*Tricia Yacovone is the founder of TAHIT, a member of AATIA and other organizations and currently serves as President of TAHIT. She is a Spanish translator, interpreter and instructor in Austin.*