



NEWS

Businessman poet to steer heiress' gift

By Charles Storch and Tribune staff reporter
Chicago Tribune • Published: Feb 04, 2004 at 12:00 am

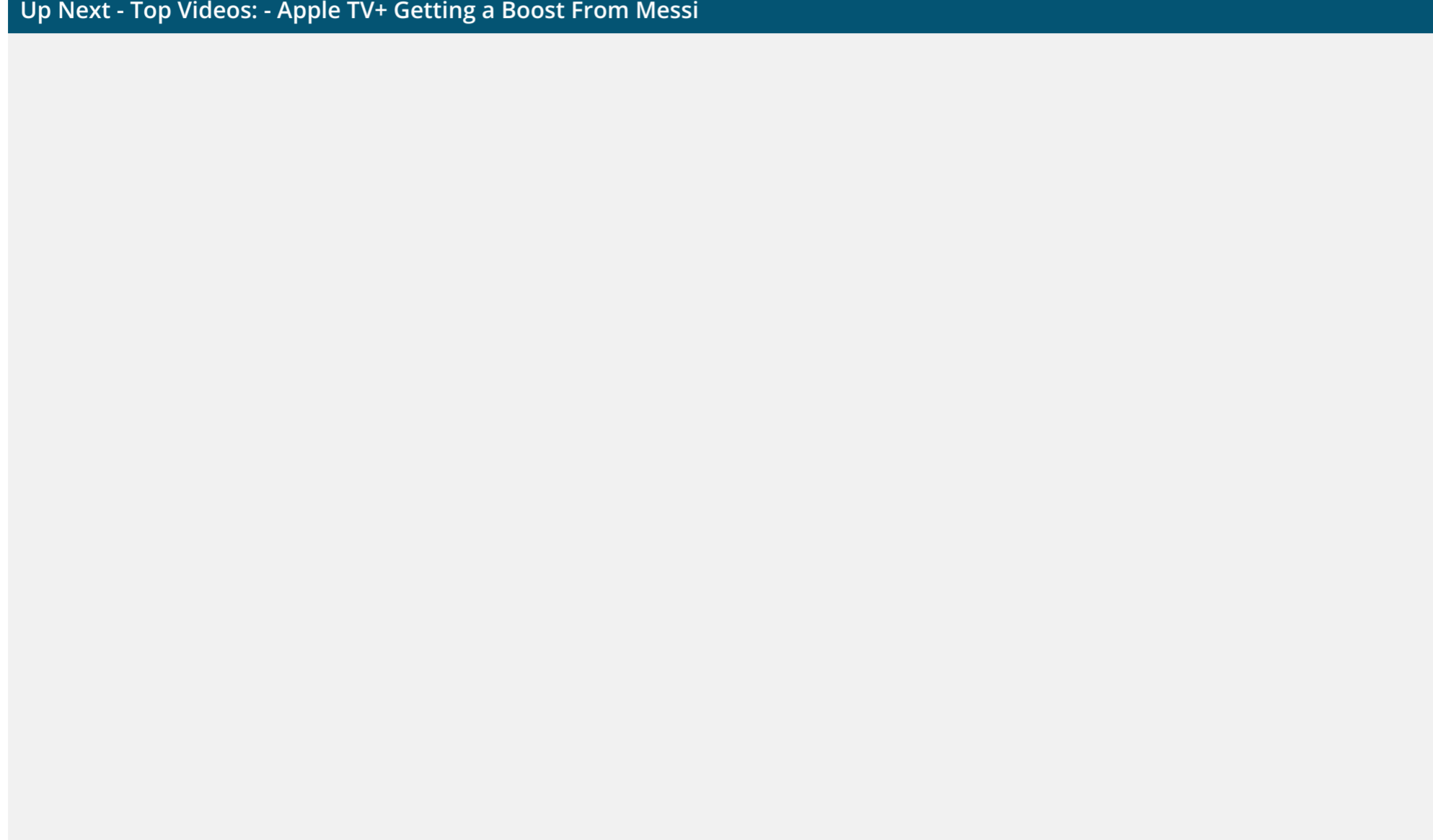


The Chicago-based Poetry Foundation, beneficiary of a dazzling gift that eventually may exceed \$100 million, on Tuesday named as its president a Wall Streeter with experience in money and meter.

John Barr, a founder and managing director of the SG Barr Devlin investment banking firm and a published poet, was selected after a long search that began in July and drew nearly 200 applicants.

More than a love of poetry attracted candidates: The foundation, publisher of the small, 91-year-old monthly Poetry, has already gotten an estimated \$28 million of what is believed to be the largest gift to a literary group: some \$100 million over 30 years from pharmaceutical heiress Ruth Lilly of Indianapolis.

Many of the foundation's proposals for using the gift have been on hold until a president takes the helm.



Barr, 61, said he has begun spending several days a week in Chicago as he and his wife, Penny, wind down their commitments in New York. He said he hopes to begin full-time work here in about a month. The Barrs both graduated from Lisle High School, though he was born in Nebraska and she in Wisconsin, and they view the move as a homecoming.

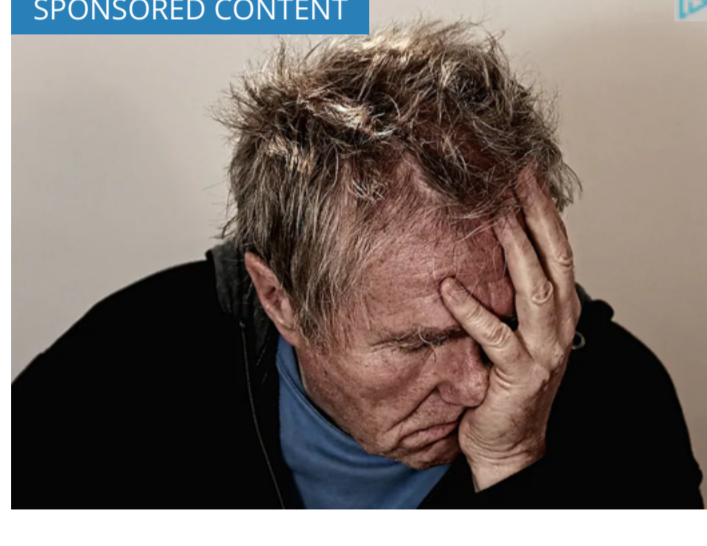
Leading the foundation represents "a convergence of two things in my life: my Wall Street career of 30 years and my writing life," Barr said. He cited another winning combination: "the importance and credibility of Poetry magazine and a substantial act of philanthropy by Ruth Lilly."



Chicago hospitals awarded distinctions for price transparency

Barr said he believes the foundation "could be like a small, well-run company, but a company whose purpose is to make an important home for American poetry."

The foundation will seek ways to "discover unmet needs in poetry and meet them," Barr said, but its first priority will be sustaining the magazine.



I Had Enough of My Keurig! Was About to Throw It in the Trash when I Found This ☑

The idea of a machine that could produce hot coffee at the touch of a button seemed like a dream come true.

By Angelino's Coffee

Barr is a president emeritus of the Poetry Society of America. Tree Swenson, executive director of the Academy of American Poets in New York, said she believes Barr is a "wonderful choice" to lead the foundation and has "the right vision for this incredible opportunity."

Barr began writing poetry in high school, but it gained meaning for him while he was in the Navy in Vietnam, he said. He has written six books of poetry, the most recent being "Grace: An Epic Poem" in 1999. He also has finished a non-fiction manuscript about poetry that grew out of his teaching of a graduate writing course at Sarah Lawrence College in New York.

The college's faculty notes said Barr has "pursued parallel lives as a businessman and a poet, following in the tradition of T.S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens."

"I wish--in my dreams," said Barr, when told of the company in which he had been placed.

Barr has never had a poem published in Poetry and can't remember having submitted a manuscript there, he said, noting that his form has been the book-length poem. Lilly is among the many poets rejected by Poetry over the years.

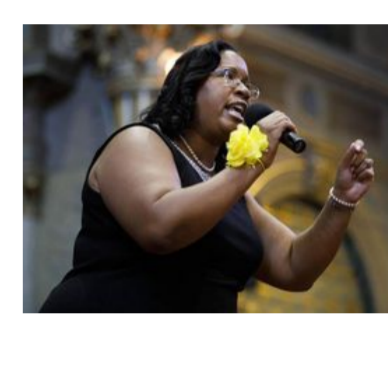
Barr's firm specializes in mergers and acquisitions in the energy industry. He previously worked at the Morgan Stanley investment company, where he led its public utility group and helped found the predecessor of Dynegy Inc., a one-time high-flier in energy trading.

Dynegy's "greatness and fall from greatness happened after I was involved," Barr said.



Most Read

Chicago treasurer accused of misconduct and ethical violations in letter city kept secret for years



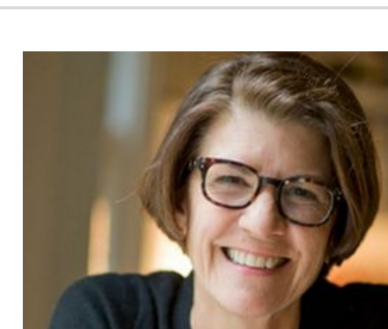
5:00 AM

Daily horoscope for September 5, 2023

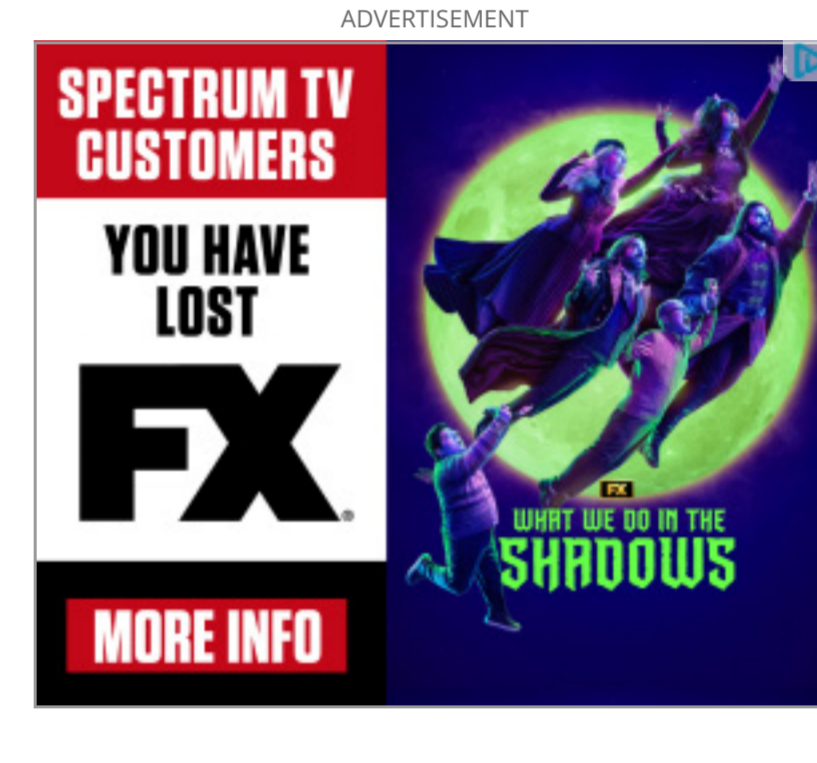


12:00 AM

Ask Amy: Out-of-control dog brought to party



3:30 AM



You May Like Sponsored Links by Taboola



See How Much It Will Cost to Install Solar Panels in New Jersey

EasySolar

Learn More

Here Are 20+ of the Coolest Gifts for This 2023.

Gadgets

Read More

Early Signs & Symptoms Of Narcolepsy Seniors Should Look Out For

Narcolepsy Treatment | Search Ads

Plastic Surgeon: "Forget Collagen, Use This Home Remedy To Fill In Wrinkles"

Beverly Hills MD

Taboola Feed

Tinnitus Discovery Leaves Doctors Speechless (Try Tonight)

Wellnessguide101.com | Sponsored

Learn more

U.S. Surgeon: This Simple Trick To Fix Your Prostate Immediately

Healthy Guru | Sponsored

A 70-Year-Old Engineer Designed This Sneaker For Elderly Women All Over Th...

Sursell | Sponsored

Read More

Here's What a New Roof Should Cost You In 2023

HomeBuddy | Sponsored

Learn More

Heart Surgeon Begg Americans: "Stop Doing This To Your Avocados"

Gundry MD | Sponsored

Learn More

AmeriStar | High Yield Certificates of Deposit

AmeriStar LLC | Sponsored

Learn More

New Retirement Villages Near Hammonton (Take a Look at the Prices)

SearchAllike | Sponsored

ADVERTISEMENT

