

Night at Castle will cost \$27,600

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The first members of the public to spend the night at Hearst Castle in at least 50 years will pay \$27,666 for the privilege.

The winning bid capped a high-profile eBay charity auction that ended Saturday night.

Results were announced at the Friends of Hearst Castle's "Enchanted Evening" fundraiser at the State Park encom-

Organizers were hoping for \$100,000; they say shaky economy may have affected bid totals

passing the former estate of William Randolph Hearst.

Auction managers from Kompolt Online Auction Agency in San Luis Obispo won't release the name of the successful bidder until payment was complete and the winner authorizes having his or her name announced.

Kompolt partner Melissa James said the auction generated nearly 70,000 unique page views on eBay, and many more return visits online by some prospective bidders.

While bidding stations were provided at the event, nobody used them, James said. However, attendees also could

have bid by cell phone. The winning bid was made at 6:09 p.m. Saturday.

Event organizers say auction results likely were dampened by uncertainty about the slower-growing economy and the national financial crisis. They had hoped the e-auction would raise about \$100,000.

Bidding opened Sept. 17 at 99 cents, rose to \$10,000 in three days and then stalled for nearly a week, as news of bank

failures, federal bailouts and other grim financial news swirled around the world.

The winning bid will go into an endowment fund, as will other money raised at the Friends' 10th annual "Enchanted Evening" on the fabled hilltop Saturday night.

Proceeds from the endowment are to be used toward various Friends' missions.

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which include restoring artifacts from Hearst's collection of more than 22,500 artworks and antiquities.

Hoyt Fields, the Castle's museum manager, told The Tribune that among the next items on the restoration list are a 17th century painting, 6th century B.C. Etruscan dolio or jar, 17th century Spanish reliquary

cross and 2nd century B.C. southern Italian, red-figure hydria — a three-handled Greek pot for carrying water.

At the Enchanted Evening, donors who had shelled out \$325 per ticket basked in sun-drenched, wind-free colonnade and terrace areas near the Neptune Pool, while sipping wine and munching on crab salad or smoked duck on wild rice.

Later, in a lavishly decorated tent, attendees had Four

Vines and Edward Sellers wines, both of Paso Robles, and dined on chef Maegen Loring's vegetable terrine, watercress soup with champagne grapes, and grilled shrimp and filet with cocoa-lavender butter and roasted cauliflower puree.

People also bid on dozens of items offered in silent and live auctions, including two swim parties in Castle pools, various personalized tours, the right to land on Hearst Ranch's

airstrip and trips to Los Angeles, San Francisco and Paris.

Steve White of Lake Matthews, near Riverside, was one of two people in a fierce bidding duel for a two-hour Neptune Pool swim party for 10.

The competitors were both allowed to win at a cost of \$6,500 each for separate parties.

"I'm as happy as can be," the retired Dairy Queen franchise owner said. "I had a really, really good time and I'm looking forward to next year."