



# WINTER EQUESTRIAN FESTIVAL WEEKLY WIRE

WEEK 5 • FEBRUARY 5, 2026

**SPOTLIGHT ON:**  
HUNTER GROOM  
LUIS ESCALERA

**AN INSIDER'S LOOK**  
AT THE FIDELITY  
INVESTMENTS®  
GRAND PRIX WITH  
EQUIRATINGS

**GCC DISTRIBUTES**  
\$2.3 MILLION IN  
PALM BEACH COUNTY







# A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This past Saturday night blew me away. Almost literally...

It was cold. It was windy. Conditions were not ideal. As a lifelong New Yorker, it is against my religion to complain about Florida weather, but sometimes you must call a spade a spade. What struck me more than the weather, however, was the cause.

This community raised \$2.3 million dollars for local non-profits throughout Palm Beach County. Two. Point. Three. MILLION! Playing a small role in this event each year is an honor, and the team that makes it happen is nothing short of incredible.

This year, Make-A-Wish of Southern Florida was crowned the winner,

delivering \$100,000 to guarantee 10 wishes to local children with critical illnesses. During the evening's press conference, Jessica Rivera, Senior Community Engagement Specialist for Make-A-Wish of Southern Florida, said that the entire evening showcased the power of a wish, and I couldn't agree more.

GCC showcases the power of Wellington International's wish to make a difference; the impact of the equestrian community's wish to give back; and our collective wish to be part of something far bigger than ourselves.

Catch up on all things GCC 2026 on page 20.

*The Wire* is produced for, about and in celebration of YOU. If you have story ideas, want to share content with us from your Wellington International experience, or would like to submit a letter to the editor—please email [press@wellingtoninternational.com](mailto:press@wellingtoninternational.com).

You can find *The Wire* distributed weekly on Thursdays throughout the showgrounds and online at [WellingtonInternational.com](http://WellingtonInternational.com).

All the best,  
**Lindsay Brock**  
Editor

PHOTOS ©SUZYINC



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# A GRAND PRIX THAT SETS THE TONE:

WEF'S PROVEN LAUNCHPAD FOR HISTORIC SEASONS

A win in the Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix at WEF has repeatedly marked the beginning of seasons that go on to redefine what is possible at the very top of the sport.

The Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix at the Winter Equestrian Festival holds a unique place on the five-star calendar. Positioned early in the year and contested against consistently elite fields, it has become more than a prestigious standalone victory. A look back at the past ten winners reveals a clear pattern: success in this Grand Prix has often been the first signal of seasons that deliver sustained dominance, and in some cases, performances that rewrite the record books.

### 2025: KENT FARRINGTON & GREYA RESET THE RECORDS

The most striking recent example came last season. When Kent Farrington and Greya won the Fidelity

Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix in 2025, few could have predicted just how historic the year ahead would become.

That Wellington victory proved to be the opening chapter of a season unlike any previously recorded. By the end of the year, Farrington had secured nine five-star Grand Prix or World Cup victories, surpassing the long-standing record of eight wins that he himself first set in 2017, and was again the top-ranked rider in the world.

Greya's achievements elevated the season even further. With seven five-star Grand Prix victories in a single calendar year, she became the most successful horse ever recorded at five-star level

in one season, breaking the previous benchmark of six wins held by Gazelle in 2017. What began under the Florida sun culminated with victory in the Rolex Grand Prix of Geneva and an early favorite for the 2026 Aachen World Championships was confirmed.

### 2019: MARTIN FUCHS' SEVEN-WIN SEASON

In 2019, Martin Fuchs arrived in Wellington after opening his five-star campaign with a World Cup victory in Europe at Basel with Clooney 51. The pair's success in the Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix at WEF was Fuchs's second major win of the season and an early indication that he was stepping into the very top tier of the sport.

From there, Fuchs kept adding to the season tally with wins in Lyon, Geneva, Cascais, Madrid and ultimately London. Across different venues and atmospheres, the then 27-year-old converted opportunity into results time and again, eventually closing out the year with seven five-star Grand Prix and World Cup wins. Week 5 in Wellington was again an early launchpad.

### 2017: KENT FARRINGTON & GAZELLE SET THE BENCHMARK

Before Greya rewrote the limits of what was possible, it was Kent Farrington and Gazelle who set the benchmark. Their victory in the 2017 running of the Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix during Week 5 at WEF also proved to be a

cornerstone of a landmark season.

That year, Kent went on to record eight five-star Grand Prix or World Cup wins, the highest total ever achieved in a single season at the time. The record would stand until Farrington surpassed it himself in 2025. Gazelle's role in setting that original benchmark places the 2017 WEF victory firmly within a broader pattern of early-season success translating into year-long dominance.

### A CONSISTENT SIGNAL OF WHAT'S TO COME

Across the past ten editions of the Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix, the evidence is compelling. These wins are rarely isolated moments. Instead, they frequently precede seasons defined by multiple five-star victories, sustained competitiveness in the sport's strongest fields, and historic milestones at the highest level.

As the next chapter of the Winter Equestrian Festival unfolds, the Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix once again stands as an early indicator, not just of who is in form, but of which partnerships may go on to shape the season ahead.



Scan to view this week's Fan Guide!

## Former Champions

Who are the combinations that have won the CSI5\* Fidelity Investments® Grand Prix in the last decade?

Date	Winners	Elo at the Time	Elo Field Strength	Winning Margin (in secs)
2025	Kent Farrington Greya	772	712	0.34
2024	Darragh Kenny Amsterdam 27	705	705	0.70
2023	McLain Ward Callas	652	708	1.06
2022	Philipp Weishaupt Coby 8	702	713	0.46
2021	Shane Sweetnam Alejandro	703	717	0.13
2020	McLain Ward Noche De Ronda	689	681	2.05
2019	Martin Fuchs Clooney 51	770	673	0.44
2018	Daniel Bluman Ladriano Z	659	677	1.04
2017	Kent Farrington Gazelle	710	672	1.21
2016	McLain Ward Rothchild	766	686	1.09

EQUIRATINGS

## Season-Defining Riders

Which riders packed the most five-star Grand Prix and World Cup wins into a single season?

Year	Rider	5* GP/WC Wins in One Year
2025	Kent Farrington	9
2017	Kent Farrington	8
2019	Martin Fuchs	7
2010	McLain Ward	6
2025	Scott Brash	6
2024	Martin Fuchs	5
2023	Julien Epailard	5
2022	Daniel Deusser	5
2017	Steve Guerdat	5
2015	Scott Brash	5
2014	Scott Brash	5
2011	Eric Lamaze	5

EQUIRATINGS



## History-Making Horses

Who are the horses with the most five-star Grand Prix or World Cup victories in 1 calendar year?

Year	Horse	5* GP/WC Wins in 1 year
2025	Greya Kent Farrington	7
2017	Gazelle Kent Farrington	6
2014	Hello Sanctos Scott Brash	5
2011	Hickstead Eric Lamaze	4
2015	Hello Sanctos Scott Brash	4
2016	Equita van't Zorgvliet Daniel Deusser	4
2019	Clooney 51 Martin Fuchs	4
2019	Explosion W Ben Maher	4
2020	Victorio des Frotards Steve Guerdat	4

EQUIRATINGS

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# Mind your Melon



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**Charles Owen SP8 Plus**  
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Shop it at The In Gate in Vendor Village and Pony Island



**FreeJump Voronoi Carbon**  
Shop it at Ride EquiSafe in Vendor Village



**GPA Star Lady Glossy**  
Shop it at Miki Saddlery in Vendor Village



**KEP Carbon Elite Matte**  
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**Kask Star Lady Hunter**  
Shop it at EQUIS in Vendor Village



## Ringside Health

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### ON-SITE AT WELLINGTON INTERNATIONAL

#### On-Site Medical Care

Acute injuries, sprains, illness visits & emergency coordination  
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Onsite lab testing (flu/COVID/strep), advanced diagnostics  
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#### IV & Recovery Services

Hydration, immune & energy drips  
Vitamins, recovery blends, NAD+ therapy  
Injection therapy: Vit C/D, Tri-Immune, Lipo-B, Zinc, Biotin & more

#### Wellness & Longevity

Hormone therapy, peptide therapy  
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Functional and Integrative Medicine  
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#### Cosmetic & Dermatology

Skin health treatments & medical-grade products  
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# SHOW & TELL

We're Show & Tell, a horse show and travel blog guiding you around the show circuit. While we have a permanent winter base in South Florida, we'll be bringing you insider tips this winter on how to make the most of your time here.

## Wellness Week

This week, we are diving into the health, wellness, and beauty finds in the greater Wellington area. Read on for where to find a good facial or Pilates lesson. It's definitely a working list, so be sure to send in your favorites that we missed!

### Relive:

- ★ **Cryo:** if you love the immediate energy and mood boost from 3 minutes of cryotherapy, this is your spot.
- ★ **IV drips:** also available at Relive after a long day at the show or a big night out.

### Nails:

- ★ **Kate Kova nails:** incredibly clean Russian manicure, this is a new find and on the pricey side, but she does such a thorough job. You can book through her Instagram [@kate\\_kova\\_nails](#)
- ★ For an easier “drop-in” spot, **Nina at IPlanet Nails** does a good job.

### Hair:

- ★ **IGK studio:** a hair salon trusted nationwide that you can find in the Nora district.

### Facial:

- ★ **Beauty Ambassade:** while a pricey facial, it's definitely worth it. They use only Biologique Recherche and Valmont—two brands with incredibly high-quality products and cult followings. **P.S.A.:** this is one of my (Adrienne) favorite gift cards to give everyone who loves a good facial or body treatment, and it's a nice way to treat someone in a way they might not themselves
- ★ **Flawless by Melissa Fox:** similar in feel to Beauty Ambassade, their facials are definitely a treat-yourself moment. They use high-quality products and provide a really serene experience. As recommended by a trusted friend, I loved my facial with Linda and will be going back to try their head spa experience. (Lucy)

- ★ **Sana Skin Studio:** this completely “clean” beauty studio just opened in the developing Nora District in West Palm. We hear their facials are very relaxing and slightly more price-friendly than the previous two options. Their aesthetic feel and wide selection of skin and body care products to purchase is really what caught our eye.

### Moksha Yoga:

- ★ My favorite spot to decompress, it also has a real community feel to it, which is nice. While the classes aren't heated, the open-air feel of the main studio will keep your muscles warm. Try to take a vinyasa class with Cora, the owner. *Pro tip: they offer private sessions, which are very fun to do with a friend!* (Adrienne)

### Jetset Pilates:

- ★ If you're looking for the closest thing to SLT or Solidcore in Wellington and don't mind the Denemethy-ring-on-a-Friday feel, this is your spot.

- ★ **Pilates Rocks** is also a popular choice

### Pure Barre:

- ★ Your classic Barre class, we like the “Empower” version.

### Spots to try:

- ★ **Redlife Wellington:** red light therapy beds—we haven't been yet, but it's high on our to-do list
- ★ **Ject:** a med spa we've never been to, but their newest location just opened in West Palm and many of our friends go regularly.



- ★ **Living with Ivey:** beautiful clean beauty store in PB—high on our to-visit list
- ★ **Salt the spa:** salt room, sauna, and more intriguing offers...

### Coming soon

- ★ **Degree wellness:** opening in March with cryo, red light, sauna and more. We will be checking this out.

We are still on the hunt for more. Let's crowdsource together. If you know where to find a reliable massage, laser, wax, or any other wellness musts, let us know!

Check out [@weshowandtell](#) on Substack for more recommendations and subscribe to get S&T in your inbox!

- **Adrienne, Alex & Lucy**



# RUNNING ON EMPTY?

WHY CARBOHYDRATES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR RIDING PERFORMANCE

By Carolina Schneider, MS, RD, CDN, brought to you by Daily Harvest

Lately, protein gets all the buzz. And while protein is a key nutrient, did you know that carbohydrates are just as important—especially if you're an athlete? Carbs are your body's primary (and preferred) source of energy. As a rider, you really can't skip out on it. From getting the most out of your lessons to maintaining balance, coordination and control throughout your class, your muscles and brain depend on carbohydrates to perform at their best.

When you eat carbohydrates, your body breaks them down into glucose, which is used right away for energy or stored in your liver and muscles as glycogen. During exercise, your body taps into these glycogen stores to power your muscles and keep you moving. If your carb intake is too low, those energy stores run low too—leading

to fatigue, reduced stamina and slower reaction time in the saddle. Over time, under-fueling on this important nutrient can also lead to poor performance and make it harder for your body to recover after training.

Carbs don't just provide energy—they do so much more. In fact, they are the main source of dietary fiber, a nutrient most Americans fall short on. Fiber helps stabilize blood sugar levels, keeps you satisfied longer, and supports digestion and gut health. A healthy gut, in turn, improves nutrient absorption, supports your immune system, and may even help reduce inflammation.

But not all carbs are the same. The ones that get a bad rap—like pastries, cookies, cinnamon buns, and other ultra-processed foods—don't offer much

nutritional value and should be consumed in moderation. The carbs we're talking about here are the wholesome, fiber-rich ones: Fruits, vegetables, legumes like beans and chickpeas, and whole grains like oatmeal, brown rice and quinoa. These foods provide energy along with fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that help your body cope with the physical demands of riding, like exercise-induced inflammation.

The good news? Adding fiber-rich carbs to your diet is easier than you think. Start your day with an oat bowl for whole grains, add beans to your lunch, and include starchy veggies like potatoes at dinner. Between rides, snack on fresh fruits, veggies with hummus, or sip on a smoothie with fruits and veggies to keep energy steady.

As a dietitian, I'm all about making healthy eating more convenient. Daily Harvest high-protein oat bowls and smoothies make it effortless to get fiber-rich carbs like fruits, veggies, and whole grains—along with protein and healthy fats—to support a balanced diet and help fuel my workouts.

So here's the takeaway: carbs are an athlete's best friend. Choosing whole-food sources of carbohydrates helps fuel your rides, support recovery, and keep your gut healthy—so you can feel strong and energized in the saddle.

Looking for nourishing, quick-to-prepare food that fits your busy lifestyle? Check out [dailyharvest.com](#). Learn more about Carolina's approach to nutrition at [hungryforplants.com](#).



# 2026 WEF VENDORS





# AROUND THE GROUNDS

From the Wellington International Photography Collective



# AROUND THE GROUNDS

From the Wellington International Photography Collective







# SHANE SWEETNAM SOARS TO MARS EQUESTRIAN GRAND PRIX WIN



Irish Olympian Shane Sweetnam and the 10-year-old Coriaan van Klapscheut Z left nothing to chance on the grass Derby Field at Equestrian Village by winning the \$215,000 MARS Equestrian CSI4\* Grand Prix.

Six advanced to course designer Anderson Lima's (BRA) tie-breaking jump-off, and five double clears left the fate of the winner to the clock. Sweetnam shaved three seconds off the current leading time with Coriaan van Klapscheut Z, a Zangersheide gelding by Comme Il Faut 5 x Lord Z Z. After a final push to break the timer beam, the clock

read an uncatchable 41.40 seconds.

"I thought it would take more time [to get to this level], but I didn't have many horses when he stepped up to FEI last year," said Sweetnam, who has had the ride on the gelding he owns together with Voquest, LLC, since the middle of 2024. "His first week here last year, he'd never done an FEI class and was second in the WEF [Challenge Cup]. He took to it like a duck to water and was very competitive from the start—even though he was green. He really wants to leave the jumps up."



The win was a battle among fellow countrymen as Bertram Allen (IRL) took second by a half second aboard Conquest de Rigo, a 10-year-old Belgian-bred son of Fantomas de Muze and VDL Indoctro owned by Aloga Stables. The pair stopped the clock at 41.95 seconds to settle as runners-up.

"We've been second a lot, which was my year last year, so it's nice to have him put me up one spot and get the win," laughed Sweetnam, who finished 2025 on a high note with Coriaan van Klapscheut Z by winning a three-star grand prix at Wellington International. "With horses, they'll tell you what the plan is, especially at this level, but he's comfortable already, and now we can smooth it out."

Sweetnam was sent a video of Coriaan van Klapscheut Z during the summer of 2024 and made an impromptu trip to Sweden to try the horse, previously owned by Abdel Saïd. "It was worth the trip," explained Sweetnam, a two-time Irish Olympian.

"He's a funny character; very smart, not spooky but quite sharp about his surroundings," continued Sweetnam, whose groom Maria Israelsson, was honored with the Double H Farm Grooms Award and \$500 prize for her care and preparation of Coriaan van Klapscheut Z.

USA's Natalie Dean rounded out the podium placings riding Mr Boombastic, a 12-year-old Selle Français gelding (Vigo Cece x Sable Rose) owned by Marigold Sporthorses, on a time of 44.03 seconds.







# CHAMPIONS GALLERY



Gabiela Caicedo rode Tully Lark to co-champion in the WEF 4 Itty Bitty Jumper division for owner Mailin Delia Beckman.



Spiderman, owned by Kendall Cafferty and ridden by Julia Shehadeh, was champion of the WEF 4 Younger Cross Rail division, sponsored by the Always Faithful Equestrian Club.



Maximus, owned and ridden by Primrose McCollister, was co-champion of the Itty Bitty Jumper division during WEF 4.



Cellestino, owned by Stephanie Bulger and ridden by Jennifer Hannan, was awarded the Champion Equine Insurance Hunter Style Award presented by Laura Fetterman after winning the \$25,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby presented by LeMieux during WEF 4.



Manna Haca, owned and ridden by Nirvana Hank, won the \$15,000 NAL 1.35m Amateur Jumper Classic, sponsored by Horseware Ireland, earning them the Champion Equine Insurance Jumper Style Award for WEF 4, presented by Laura Fetterman.



# CHAMPIONS GALLERY

## LEADING LADY RIDER AWARD STANDINGS

PRESENTED BY MARTHA W. JOLICOEUR, DOUGLAS ELLIMAN

1	NATALIE DEAN USA	315 PTS
2	LILLIE KEENAN USA	274 PTS
3	ERYNN BALLARD CAN	229 PTS
4	NINA MALLEVAEY FRA	201 PTS
5	JESSICA MENDOZA GBR	190 PTS



Natalie Dean—aboard Mr. Boombastic—is presented with the Martha Jolicoeur, Douglas Elliman Leading Lady Rider Award by Martha Jolicoeur (left) and Dr. Stephen Norton (right).

## \$25,000 LEADING INTERNATIONAL RIDER BONUS STANDINGS

PRESENTED BY MICHAEL SMITH

1	SHANE SWEETNAM IRL	\$111,509
2	LILLIE KEENAN USA	\$99,500
3	BERTRAM ALLEN IRL	\$94,338
4	ERYNN BALLARD CAN	\$60,700
5	NATALIE DEAN USA	\$56,506

## DON LITTLE MASTERS STANDINGS

PRESENTED BY RUSHY MARSH FARM

1	CAMILLE PACHECO CESARSKI & FLINT T.S. ET	52 PTS
2	BLYTHE MASTERS & PALERMO VAN PAAL Z	45 PTS
3	PHILIP STEINKRAUS & PAUL DE LUXE	44 PTS
4	REZA SHABANI & DAKOTA Z	42 PTS
5	ELIZABETH MALONEY & CLEMENTINE	41 PTS
	JEANNE REID & ATALANTE D'UHART	41 PTS

## BRAINJUICE UNDER 25 GRAND PRIX SERIES

1	CAMPBELL BROWN USA	107 PTS
2	TONY STORMANNS GER	89.5 PTS
	VIRGINIA BONNIE USA	89.5 PTS
4	EVA FISHERMAN USA	81 PTS
5	ALEXANDER ALSTONUSA	77 PTS

## OVERALL HUNTER JUNIOR/AMATEUR-OWNER RIDER

PRESENTED BY YETI

1	PARKER PEACOCK	317 PTS
2	LILLY HERZOG	273 PTS
3	LEXI MAOUNIS	206 PTS
4	JOHN INGRAM	196 PTS
5	MELISSA JACOBS	180 PTS

## OVERALL HUNTER PROFESSIONAL RIDER

PRESENTED BY YETI

1	VICTORIA COLVIN	1298 PTS
2	JENNIFER HANNAN	736 PTS
3	SCOTT STEWART	732 PTS
4	CHRISTOPHER PAYNE	630 PTS
5	NICK HANESS	444 PTS





# 3 FACTS VETERINARIANS WISH YOU KNEW ABOUT DJD

Get a better understanding of degenerative joint disease (DJD) and how you and your veterinarian can work together to help manage the disease in your horse.

Degenerative joint disease (DJD) is a major cause of equine lameness.<sup>1</sup> To help keep more horses moving, American Regent Animal Health, maker of Adequan i.m.<sup>®</sup> (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan), talked to a group of leading equine veterinarians. Here are their top insights about DJD.

### 1. DJD IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DISEASE

Equine DJD, commonly called osteoarthritis, may cause lameness in horses of all ages and breeds. It is characterized by progressive deterioration of the articular cartilage along with changes in bone and soft tissues of the joint.<sup>1</sup>

Veterinarians diagnose DJD, in part, by looking at radiographs. Dr. Kyla Ortved, the Jacques Jenny Endowed Term Chair of Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center, said she sees a lot of pre-purchase X-rays from people looking to buy young horses. "I'm finding that a lot of those pretty young horses have radiographic changes," Dr. Ortved says.

### 2. THE EARLIER THE BETTER

A proactive joint-health approach for the average performance horse should include twice-a-year lameness exams and hoof radiographs to guide the farrier, according to Dr. Kent Allen, owner of Virginia Equine Imaging and a founder of the International Society of Equine Locomotor Pathology. Because DJD gets worse over time, it's important to manage it early in the disease process

when treatment is most effective for horses. "You're going to be able to [help] them. They're going to be successful at their job, and they're going to keep doing the job," Dr. Allen said. "And that's where I've focused my efforts on use of Adequan i.m. (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan) and I've found it very successful."

### 3. NOT ALL PRODUCTS ARE CREATED EQUALLY

As the only FDA-approved PSGAG (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan) for DJD in horses, Adequan i.m. actually treats the disease, not just the clinical signs.<sup>2,3</sup> It has been proven to reduce inflammation, restore synovial joint lubrication, repair joint cartilage and reverse the disease cycle.<sup>2,3</sup>

Alternatively, joint supplements and nutraceuticals are not regulated by the FDA. That means manufacturers are not required to prove safety or effectiveness, nor are they required to verify ingredient makeup or manufacturing processes.

FDA approval is important to Dr. Robin Dabareiner, who worked at Texas A&M University for 23 years before working at Waller Equine Hospital in Texas. "I try to talk to clients, telling them I feel it's a bigger bang for your buck if you go with the intramuscular Adequan [than unproven supplements]," Dr. Dabareiner said.



**BRIEF SUMMARY:** Prior to use please consult the product insert, a summary of which follows: **CAUTION:** Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian. **INDICATIONS:** Adequan i.m.<sup>®</sup> is recommended for the intramuscular treatment of non-infectious degenerative and/or traumatic joint dysfunction and associated lameness of the carpal and hock joints in horses. **CONTRAINDICATIONS:** There are no known contraindications to the use of intramuscular Polysulfated Glycosaminoglycan. **WARNINGS:** Do not use in horses intended for human consumption. Not for use in humans. Keep this and all medications out of the reach of children. **PRECAUTIONS:** The safe use of Adequan i.m.<sup>®</sup> in horses used for breeding purposes, during pregnancy, or in lactating mares has not been evaluated. For customer care, or to obtain product information, visit [www.adequan.com](http://www.adequan.com). To report an adverse event please contact American Regent, Inc. at 1-888-354-4857 or email [pv@americanregent.com](mailto:pv@americanregent.com).

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1. McIlwraith CW, Frisbie DD, Kawcak CE, van Weeren PR. Joint Disease in the Horse. St. Louis, MO: Elsevier, 2016; 33-48.  
2. Adequan<sup>®</sup> i.m. (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan), Package Insert. American Regent, Inc..  
3. Burba DJ, Collier MA, DeBault LE, Hanson-Painton O, Thompson HC, Holder CL: In vivo kinetic study on uptake and distribution of intramuscular tritium-labeled polysulfated glycosaminoglycan in equine body fluid compartments and articular cartilage in an osteochondral defect model. J Equine Vet Sci 1993; 13: 696-703.





# EQUESTRIAN COMMUNITY UNITES TO DELIVER LASTING IMPACT

at the 17th Annual Great Charity Challenge  
Sponsored by Fidelity Investments®



**Make-A-Wish Foundation of Southern  
Florida Receives \$100,000**

The 17th Annual Great Charity Challenge sponsored by Fidelity Investments® (GCC) once again demonstrated the powerful role sport can play in driving meaningful community change. Held on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at Wellington International during the Winter Equestrian Festival, the event raised more than \$2.3 million, benefiting a grand total of 90 Palm Beach County

nonprofit organizations.

Since its founding in 2009 by Mark and Paige Bellissimo, the GCC has distributed more than \$24 million to 370 local nonprofits, operating with a commitment to transparency that ensures every dollar raised is directed back into the community.

Under the lights of the International Arena,  
**(Continued on Pg.22)**



**Wellington Regional  
Medical Center**

## HEALTH EXPO

**DATE**  
WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 11  
2026

**WHERE**  
WELLINGTON  
CLUB

**TIME**  
10AM – 2PM



- Stroke Awareness
- Sepsis Education
- Emergency Services
- Heart Health
- Glucose Screening
- Nutrition
- Pharmacy
- Body Mass Index
- Physical Therapy
- and more!

*All are welcome!*



## When Speed Counts

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36 teams took part in a relay-style jumping competition during “Saturday Night Lights.” Each team—comprised of three riders ranging from emerging talent to Olympic-level competitors—was randomly paired with a local charity, racing not only for top honors but to generate vital funding for their assigned organizations.

“Each year, the Great Charity Challenge continues to grow because of the unwavering support of our partners and donors,” said Anne Caroline Valtin, GCC Executive Director. “Their belief in our mission allows us to expand our reach and strengthen the vital work of Palm Beach County nonprofits, and we are deeply thankful for their ongoing commitment.”

All participating nonprofits received a minimum grant of \$15,000, reinforcing the GCC’s belief that everyone involved is a winner.

The evening’s top prize of \$100,000 was awarded to Make-A-Wish Foundation of Southern Florida, represented by Double Wood Farm’s Isabelle Ehman, Elizabeth Rinehart and Luke Rinehart, supported by MARS Equestrian.

“We create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses across South Florida,” Jessica Rivera, Senior Community Engagement Specialist for Make-A-Wish of Southern

Florida, an organization making its first appearance as part of GCC. “Our mission is to inject magic into children’s lives when they need it most. These are children ages 2.5 to 18, and we connect with them to help them achieve anything they wish for in the world.

“Wishes aren’t just nice, they’re necessary,” continued Rivera, who was joined for GCC by Katarina Alshaier, Make-A-Wish ambassador and previous wish recipient. “Ten wishes will be granted because of this night. The energy, teamwork and collaboration—it has made me love the equestrian community.”

Coming in second place was the team for Urban League of Palm Beach County, sponsored by Blackheart



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Farm and supporting sponsor J&D Burrows Foundation. The team consisted of Campbell Kahn, Lukene Arenas Saravia and Paul O’Shea, earning \$90,000 for their charity.

The Education Foundation of Palm Beach County finished third and won \$80,000. The team was made up of Collin, Olivia and Shane Sweetnam, sponsored by Spy Coast & Preston, and supporting sponsors Wingrove Academy.

The night’s festivities kicked off with the Inaugural Costume Relay Race, generously presented by the Postage Stamp Farm Foundation and Artemis

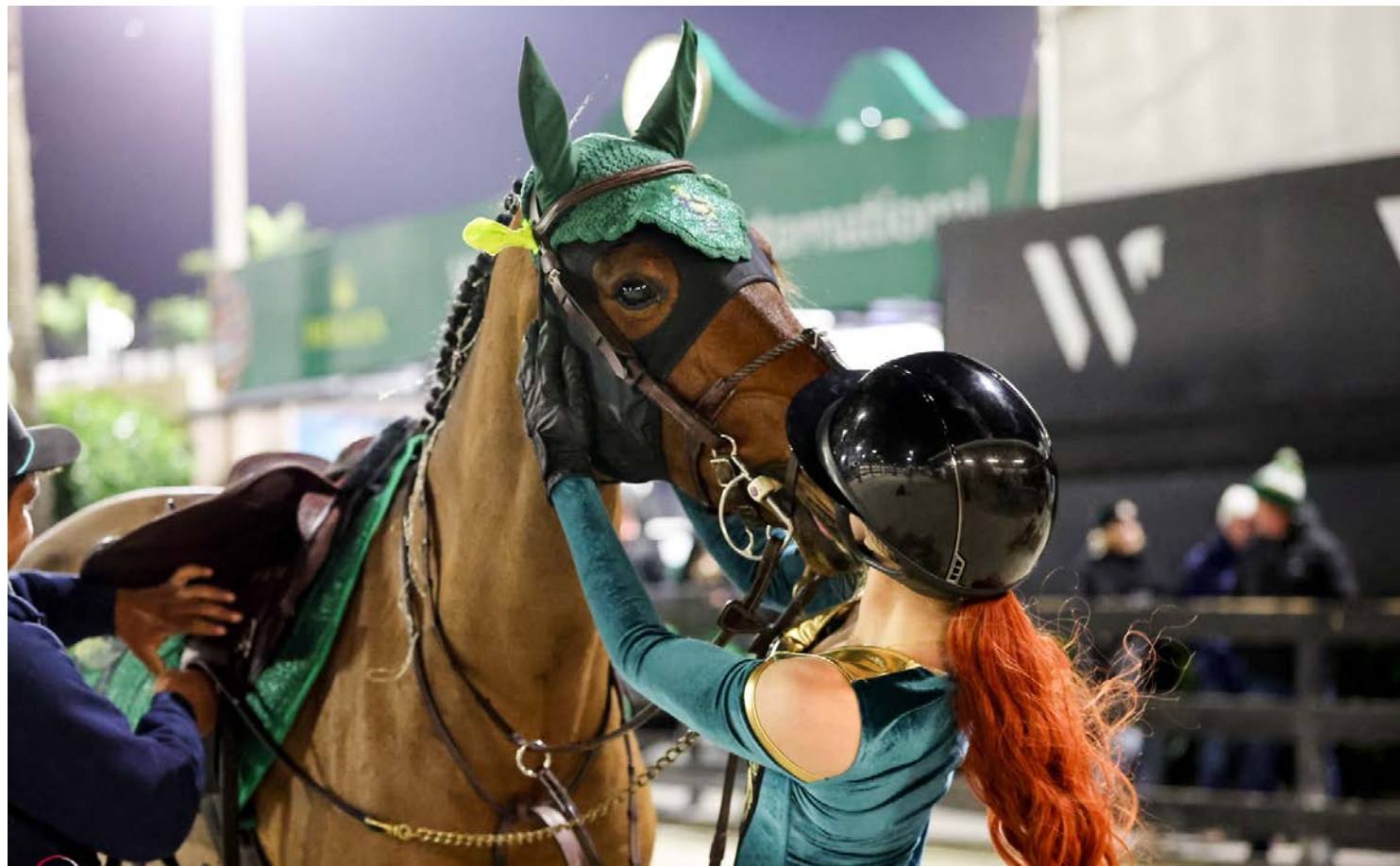
Farms. The youth-focused competition awarded \$55,000 in grants to six pre-selected nonprofit organizations, underscoring the GCC’s message of “Doing Good at Any Age.”

Beyond the main competition, the GCC distributed 54 additional grants, extending its impact across education, healthcare, animal welfare, housing, and family services throughout Palm Beach County.

One of the evening’s standout initiatives was the Volunteer Initiative, proudly supported by Dana Murphy, Keller Williams Wellington,

**(Continued on Pg.24)**





in partnership with the GCC, which recognized the essential role volunteers play in sustaining local nonprofits. Through this program, 21 organizations each received \$4,000 grants (and more), based on volunteer-submitted testimonials highlighting their dedication and service.

The event's success was made possible by the continued support of donors, sponsors, and partners, including United Way of Palm Beach County, whose involvement amplifies the GCC's reach and ensures seamless event execution, and South Florida PBS.

"Fidelity Investments is proud to give back by supporting and uplifting the

communities we serve and to be the presenting sponsor of the Winter Equestrian Festival and the 17th edition of the Great Charity Challenge" said Matthew Gibson, Head of Southeast Region, Fidelity Investments. "Congratulations to this year's participants and thank you to all involved in making this year's event such a success."

As the Great Charity Challenge continues to grow, its collaborative model—uniting equestrians, philanthropists, volunteers, and nonprofit leaders—remains a powerful force for good across Palm Beach County.



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# Luis Escalera Survives anxious wait on the Hunter Ring

Contributed by Sarah Eakin/Paper Horse Media in collaboration with HorseGrooms

The Hunter ring is renowned for its 'hurry up and wait' vibe as classes move through the show day. The wait was a particularly long one last week for hunter groom Luis Escalera after his charge Cellestino went midway through the \$25,000 USHJA International Hunt & Go Derby, presented by LeMieux, and took the lead, leaving rider Jennifer Hannan and her team on tenterhooks until the class was over.

"After his round, I went back to the barn with him to clean him up and wait for the end of the class," said Escalera. "I was watching the rest of the class and the results on my phone. I was very nervous."

Hannan's and Cellestino's

score of 188 proved sufficient to stave off the competition and leave the whole team including owner Stephanie Bulger and her mother Louise Riggio, with a well-earned victory. "There were some very good horses and riders competing after our round," said Escalera. "We had a great score and we were confident, but you never know. We were happy for it to be over."

Escalera has worked with hunters for 20 years and for Bulger and Riggio for 19 of those. "They are my favorite bosses," he said. He grew up in Mexico where his family had racehorses. But if horses in general were not unfamiliar to him when he arrived in the States, hunter horses were. "You have to

PHOTOS © BRIDGETTE NESS

pay attention to hunters' paces, their conformation, and to make sure they jump well and clear at the show," he said. "Racehorses don't have to be perfect—hunters do."

Escalera, 50, has come to love his role. "I have more contact with the hunters, because I spend more time with them and I can get to know them better like a good friend," he said. Cellestino—aka Cello in the barn—needs the extra degree of attention and patience, which Escalera has given him for the year or so that he has been in his care.

"At first, he was very fresh," he said of the 11-year old warmblood gelding by Cornet Obolensky, a stallion renowned for his powerful personality. "He wasn't wild but he had a lot of energy and you need to pay attention. Now he has learned a lot and he is much calmer. He is really charming and sweet and he really loves to jump."

Teaching Cello to take life easier was a concerted effort between Escalera and the rest of the team. The good news, said Escalera, is that, "he is super intelligent. He learns really quickly when you teach him something. I spend time grooming him and chatting to him to keep him calm. I don't know if he understands what I am saying, but I think he does."

Just four weeks in and with a win under their belt, Escalera

is feeling blessed. Jennifer is a great person and an absolute professional," he said. "We are very happy and grateful for this season."

Not yet midway through WEF, the team now sets their sights on Week 6—World Championship Hunter Rider week, commonly referred to as 'Hunter Week'. Hannan and Cellestino hope to qualify so they can return to the site of their victory—the International Arena—this time floodlit for Saturday Night Lights and the Palm Beach Hunter Spectacular. "All the classes at WEF are intense," said Escalera. "But now we are excited to see what happens in Hunter Week."



## About HorseGrooms

HorseGrooms is a global platform dedicated to supporting, educating, and connecting grooms across all disciplines of equestrian sport. Through educational resources, interviews, in-person events, and an international online community, HorseGrooms works to improve horse welfare while giving grooms the recognition, tools, and support they deserve.

HorseGrooms collaborates with events, brands, and professionals worldwide to share practical knowledge and real stories from the people who care for horses every day, from local barns to top-level competition venues.

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JAN. 10 **Country Western Night**  
**\$140,000** Palm Beach County Sports Commission CSI3\* Grand Prix

JAN. 17 **Family Night**  
**\$50,000** Palm Beach Equine Clinic Grand Prix

JAN. 24 **Military & First Responder Appreciation Night**  
Presented by Wellington Regional Medical Center  
**\$215,000** NetJets CSI4\* Grand Prix

JAN. 31 **Great Charity Challenge**  
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FEB. 07 **\$500,000** Fidelity Investments® CSI5\* Grand Prix

FEB. 14 **\$150,000** Peter Wetherill WCHR/USHJA Hunter Spectacular

FEB. 21 **\$500,000** Modon CSI5\* Grand Prix

FEB. 28 **\$150,000 Nations Cup** CSIO4\* presented by Florida Coast Equipment

MAR. 07 **\$500,000** Bainbridge Companies CSI5\* Grand Prix

MAR. 14 **ABBA Night**  
**\$215,000** Horseware Ireland CSI4\* Grand Prix

MAR. 21 **Fan Appreciation Night**  
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**\$150,000** Herta & Paul Amirian 1.50m Championship Series Jumper Final

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\*Competition times may vary, please visit [www.WellingtonInternational.com](http://www.WellingtonInternational.com) for more event information.

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