

Bringing You The Best Of Wellington

Wellington

THE MAGAZINE

November 2014

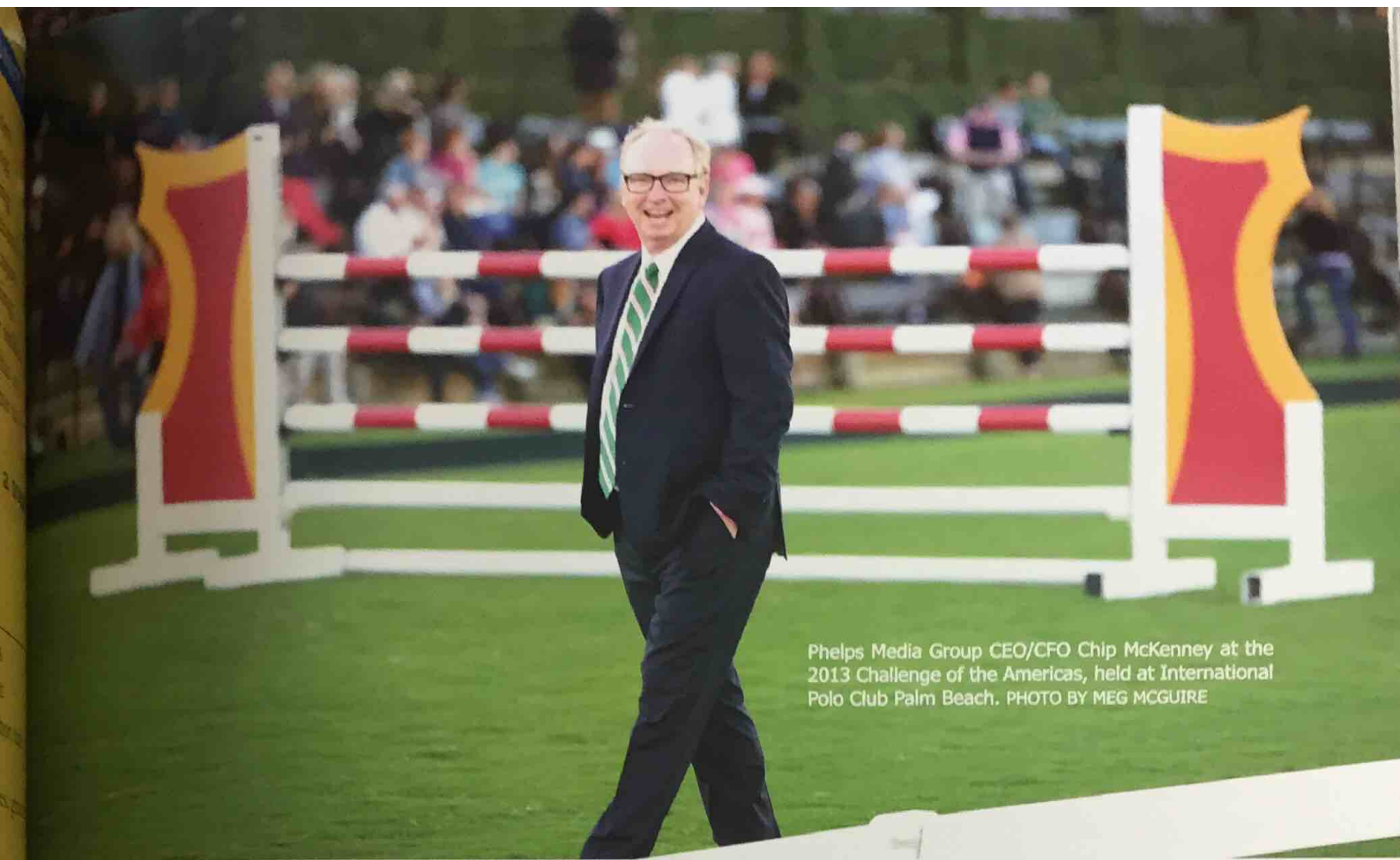
Rising Stars Of POLO



Plus

Vote For Wellington's Next Top Model
Meet IPC's Ray & Terrie Mooney
Teaching Life Skills Through Golf
Comfort Food & More At Wild West Diner

EQUESTRIAN SEASON PREVIEW



Phelps Media Group CEO/CFO Chip McKenney at the 2013 Challenge of the Americas, held at International Polo Club Palm Beach. PHOTO BY MEG MCGUIRE

Chip McKenney Brings His Professional Expertise From The West Coast To Wellington

By Mary Adelaide Brakenridge

A new face will become more familiar in Wellington's social and equestrian scenes this year — that of Chip McKenney, who recently moved from the West Coast to join Phelps Media Group as a partner and chief executive officer.

PMG, a Wellington-based equestrian public relations firm with a global reach, is already benefiting from McKenney's branding expertise and creative approach. Mason Phelps Jr., the firm's founder and president, brought McKenney in to support PMG's efforts to move the equestrian business into the greater marketplace.

"We have a sport on the tip of the iceberg of becoming well-recognized in the United States," Phelps said. "It's huge in Europe, and it's starting to at-

tract notice here as well. We are on the bubble, and we are positioning ourselves to lead the charge."

McKenney comes to Wellington from Los Angeles, where he was instrumental in guiding Troika as that company experienced a meteoric rise from a small start-up to a major brand consultancy and creative agency specializing in entertainment and sports media. He was chief operations officer there for more than 10 years. Prior to joining Troika, McKenney held the COO position at View Studios in Hollywood, Calif.

At Troika, McKenney supported the organizational side of the business and worked on broadening the scope of the company's services in order to best sup-

port its clients. "I believe if you listen to your industry and what clients are asking for, your company will naturally offer more and evolve," McKenney said. "Equestrian athletes, horse owners and event managers are understanding the importance of brand identity to distinguish themselves from the pack. Phelps Media Group is uniquely poised to lead the equestrian media industry."

McKenney is now overseeing the expansion of PMG as it adds to the services it provides, responding to the shifting and changing needs of the equestrian industry.

"We're a leader, but we're not going to rest on our laurels," Phelps said. "We have brought Chip in to help us move a rung or two up the ladder. Chip's ex-

ecutive background and organizational leadership experience give him the perfect skills for the CEO role. He has designed and integrated strong teams at multiple media companies during different stages of company growth. I am excited about Chip's ability to help our company and clients build high-performance leadership teams and cultures of success."

McKenney, a lifelong horseman, has his roots in the New England equestrian scene, where he started out as a junior in the hunters and equitation. At 16, he stepped up to the junior jumpers.

He moved to the West Coast to attend Whittier College School of Law, but did not leave his passion for equestrian sport behind, continuing to compete in the amateur jumpers while training with several top international equestrian athletes. Joie Gatlin and Morley Abey were key in supporting his amateur career, and he also trained

with Sarah Baldwin, Jamie Mann, Michael Endicott and John Endicott.

Later, McKenney made a successful switch to polo and then broke new ground by founding the Gay Polo League, the first and only league of its kind. The sixth annual GPL Tournament, the league's flagship event, will take place April 9-11, 2015 at Wellington's International Polo Club Palm Beach. The event has become a staple of the Wellington winter season, experiencing rapid growth and attracting record numbers of competitors and spectators in 2014.

"I was 50 years old and two things happened: My really good amateur horse was injured, and I realized I was the oldest in my division by about 30 years and should hang out with older people," McKenney laughed. "I stopped riding for a while, but then realized I just wanted a different experience with horses. So I took up polo, and then the GPL was born."

The GPL Tournament has connected McKenney with Wellington for the past several years, and he has enjoyed how quickly the local community embraced and supported the event.

"Wellington is a small town with an international point of view," McKenney said. "I believe that is part of the reason Wellington has been such a huge supporter of the GPL event."

All PMG staff members are in Wellington during the winter season and then travel the world to support the efforts of PMG's clients and provide close-up coverage for the company's three news web sites: PhelpsSports.com, PSDressage.com and the newly launched PSpolo.com.

"PMG is based in Wellington, yet we are an international company," McKenney noted. "We're lucky enough to be where there are some of the best equestrian competitions for four months out of the year. After season, our clients travel internationally, and we follow them."

Coming to Wellington to work at PMG was a natural move for McKenney, allowing him to live in the winter equestrian capital of the world while supporting the growth of a company with its eyes on the future.

"This company is well-positioned to offer stronger and more dynamic services to meet the changing needs of our growing client base. It's an exciting time in the marriage between the media and equestrian worlds," McKenney said. "Everybody here wants to elevate the sport into a nationally recognized sport. I thrive on being a part of change, and our industry is changing daily." □

(Top right) Mason Phelps Jr., Chip McKenney and Catherine Zachariadis talk strategy during a meeting at Phelps Media Group's Wellington office.

PHOTO BY MARY ADELAIDE BRAKENRIDGE

(Bottom far right) Chip McKenney competing in the Amateur-Owner Jumpers.

PHOTO BY CATHRIN CAMMETT

(Bottom right) Chip McKenney playing in the International Gay Polo Tournament at the Grand Champions Polo Club.

PHOTO BY MARK FINERTY

