

FLORIDA *home*

NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE WEEK:

Ballensles
in Palm Beach Gardens



**Sharapova wins
Australian Open;
Federer falls in semis**

IN SPORTS

The Palm Beach

Saturday, January 26, 2008

North Final

Wellington club goes public

By KELLY WOLFE
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WELLINGTON — A private supper club here that charged an \$8,500 membership fee is now open to the public.

The Equestrian Club by Tavern on the Green, owned by Mark Bellissimo and the Wellington Equestrian Partners, went public last week. Members who already paid their dues got refunds.

Bellissimo said he went public so he could tie the restaurant in with the neighboring horse showgrounds, which he also owns.

"It's an amenity to the entire facility," Bellissimo said Thursday.

The Equestrian Club is affiliated with the famed

**The Equestrian Club
once charged \$8,500
membership fees.**

Tavern on the Green in New York. Bellissimo said he intends to offer recreational activities, such as a pool, for bored siblings of the horsey set — kids who have no interest in the horse shows.

Bellissimo said he got the idea because he has four children, two who compete in horse shows and two who don't.

The Equestrian Club already has a storied history in Wellington. It opened its doors in 2006, and hosted a handful of fund-raisers for

local nonprofits. Its food received lackluster reviews from one nonprofit that compared it to cafeteria fare.

It closed its doors in June 2007, after the village ruled the club didn't have enough parking for the 250-seat restaurant. The club has a dinky parking lot because it was built to be the clubhouse for the neighboring Equestrian Club Estates community.

The parking issue was resolved when Bellissimo bought the showgrounds from Palm Beach Polo owner Glenn Straub. Showground parking can now double as restaurant parking.

"Everything has changed," Bellissimo said. "It's worked out really quite well."

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