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Passion for fashion (and politics)

Locals watch
races through
a different lens

By Laura Kenyon
Editor

With vice presidential hopeful Sarah Palin's wardrobe making headlines and political pundits suddenly dissecting the meaning behind cotton and couture, local fashionistas Jayne Chase and Jennifer Goodkind have decided to toss their Etro Panama hats into the mix.

Hosts of the weekly WGCH radio show, "A Fashionable Life," on 1490 WGCH Radio, the duo has long recognized that first impressions often speak as loudly as the issues.

"Image is memorable," Chase, a New Canaan resident and self-proclaimed "hockey mom" told the *Advertiser* last week. "So



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Obama wins big at High School

By Sonia Fernandez
Reporter

This year's presidential election is regarded as one of the most important of our time. Voters will make their voices heard on the issues as they turn out to the polls on Tuesday.

However, while the minimum voting age is 18, it hasn't stopped New Canaan High School students from picking who they believe would make the best president for the country.

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"Cut from the same cloth," according to Greenwich resident Jennifer Goodkind (right), she and New Canaan resident Jayne Chase (left) host a weekly radio program called "A Fashionable life."

(Laura Kenyon Photo)

Fashion —

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even though a candidate's politics and platform is the most important, people do remember what a candidate looks like."

Using French First Lady Carla Sarkozy as an example of how fashion can "reinvigorate" interest in a campaign or candidate, Goodkind said, "fashion is part of the political dialogue right now in a big way."

But with the current state of the economy, U.S. troops fighting overseas in Iraq and an election that is poised to bring a substantial degree of "change" to Washington, the women have had to make adjustments to their two-year-old show — shifting the focus in some ways from high-end designers to looking good at a reasonable price.

"We are 'under construction' like the rest of this country," she said about the show's shifting focus. "(The) subject matter has to be more substantive I think one has to talk fashion in connection with life and the world."

Staring at stock market reports from her Greenwich home, Goodkind told the *Advertiser* over the phone, "it's hard to talk about fashion in a bubble right now. You just can't."

That is why the fashion go-to gals have dedicated several of their radio segments to the wardrobe choices of today's candidates and their spouses. They have also taken their critiques to "ABC News Now," the digital offshoot of "ABC News," for which the pair covers New York Fashion Week.

In their opinion, Michelle Obama has "hit it out of the park," Sarah Palin need not dress in high-end designer duds, and Cindy McCain has a sophisticated sense of style that may not sit well with voters.

"People notice that she is wearing a brooch that's sparkling diamonds or she has on a Chanel watch," Chase said about McCain. "Even though she does appear on the campaign trail in a baseball hat and blue jeans, those are designer blue jeans."

"She looks like she could be from Fairfield County," Goodkind said about McCain's appeal to women, as a mother supporting her husband.

Palin, whom Chase told "ABC New Now" in early September had "a long way to go to be on the fashion list," has since traded her "Linda the librarian" look for a well publicized \$150,000 shopping spree that the "Fashionable Life" hosts say was a GOP faux pas.

"I think that they made a really big mistake in putting her in major designer clothes like Etro and Max Mara, when she's running around the country talking about 'Joe Sixpack,'" said Chase. "They could have very easily changed her image and gotten the same fashion effect by putting her in lines that don't cost as much, like Liz Claiborne and Dana Buckman, and they could have gone to Target easily for her. They didn't have to go to Neiman Marcus."

At the end of the day, however, Goodkind said it is the public who hunger for fashion, something that dates back to the days of Jackie O.

"We can criticize the GOP for spending that money to revamp her image," she said, "but the truth is we demand she look a certain way and this is exactly what she's doing."

Michelle Obama and Jill Biden are a bit more low key, the duo said.

"You have yet to see her in Oscar de la Renta and Bill Blass and traditional designers that cost huge amounts of money," Chase said about Obama, who wore Maria Pinto, a "moderately priced" local Chicago designer, up until the Democratic National Convention. "She wore a \$59 dress on 'the View' that sold out instantaneously from the Gap."

"Michelle Obama knows how to dress to suit her body type," Goodwin added — something the radio hosts hope to educate listeners about.

"We want women to feel confident about themselves," Chase said, whether they are wearing clothes from Saks or Kohl's.

When it comes to the guys, Chase said both Barack Obama and John McCain dress "appropriately" for their images — Obama a bit more modern with narrower suits and

often just a shirt and tie, McCain with boxier, more traditional suits.

"You can tell Obama is a more casual guy who has come from humble means," she said, "and you can tell that McCain is a conservative traditional guy that has seven houses."

The same goes for Fourth Congressional District Congressman Chris Shays and his challenger, Jim Himes.

"They both look like they live in Connecticut," said Chase.

While Himes has a bit more of a "buttoned up" look — left over, she guessed, from his Wall Street days — and Shays "looks like he's stepped off a sail boat, both men have a traditional, preppy style that fits the area they represent or hope to represent.

Goodkind said she and her partner have "tried to stay neutral and present both sides" while critiquing, but said most listeners "probably have a sense of where our feelings lie."

Both former fashion editors at magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vanity Fair*, the duo teamed up two years ago because, Goodkind said, they share a "passion for fashion" and are "cut from the same cloth."

"Our mission is to live every day with an eye to the things that create beauty in our lives," said Goodkind, adding that she and Chase feel "privileged" to be mothers, over age 35 and "doing what we love."

In addition to her gig on WGCH, Chase is fashion editor of the Cottages & Gardens publications, which include Connecticut, the Hamptons and Palm Beach.

Goodkind owns JL Rocks fine jewelry in Greenwich and Westport.

"A Fashionable Life" may be heard at 9 a.m. Wednesdays on 1490 WGCH. More information is available at fashionableliferaudio.com.

Chase suggested the following Web site for fashionistas looking to save a few pennies without sacrificing their style or get some ideas and seek the cheaper versions elsewhere: Net-a-porter.com, Style.com and Shopittome.com.