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THE MARGARET CHASE SMITH ESSAY

This issue features the top three prize-winning essays from the 2009 Margaret Chase Smith high school student essay contest, sponsored by the Margaret Chase Smith Library in Skowhegan. David Richards, the library's assistant director, introduces the essays.

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Prospects for a Rim County Population Rebound: Can Quality of Place Lure In-Migrants?

Will population rebound in Maine's rural "rim" counties? Can investing to enhance "quality of place" attract large numbers of settlers? David Vail concludes that quality-of-place investments may not be a core development tool for rural areas, but can complement traditional rural economic policy measures.

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Maine's Paradoxical Politics

Kenneth Palmer discusses the paradoxes of Maine's politics that often draw national attention and how these paradoxes have contributed to Maine having a "creative and effective political system."

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Economic Assessment of Children's Health and the Environment in Maine

Reducing children's exposure to environmental toxins is important for both moral and economic reasons. Mary Davis analyzes the economic impact of environmentally related childhood illnesses in Maine, concluding that funding for initiatives aimed at reducing childhood exposure to environmental pollutants "would be money well spent."

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Development in the Gulf of Maine: Avoiding Geohazards and Embracing Opportunities

Maine needs to be proactive in mapping potential seafloor hazards if it is to safely develop its offshore resources, especially wind and tidal energy. The authors focus on one widespread and important geohazard, shallow natural gas deposits.

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Investing in Human Capital in Difficult Times: Maine's Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program aims to meet the needs of employers through improved access to a skilled labor force and to improve job prospects for low-income and unemployed Mainers by providing education and training. Preliminary data suggest a high level of satisfaction by program participants and that graduates are finding positions in high-growth, high-wage occupations.

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