

express their “vanity” by creating messages designed to draw attention to themselves – or at least their motor vehicles. They tell their stories, promote their causes, or promulgate their phrases, in the most abbreviated way possible – in the four to eight characters allowed on vanity plates (depending on the jurisdiction).

Although it has pejorative connotations, “vanity” can be a good thing. Without vanity, there would be no great art, music or literature, because if artists, musicians or writers didn’t want to show off their work, they wouldn’t create it.

Motorists vanitize because they have messages that they want to convey. The vanitizers profiled in *LCNS2ROM* all report that observers frequently ask them about their vanity plates, which allows them to tell their stories, or to promote their causes--or thier careers.

Vanity plates are great conversation-starters. Vanity plates can turn strangers into neighbors, and neighbors into friends, as Holly’s story about how she befriended Charlotte, after noticing Charlotte’s vanity plate, demonstrates.



Holly was visiting Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on business, when she received the worst news that a parent can get: her 21 year old son, Brent, had died. Traveling back to her hotel during a tropical rainstorm, and numbed by grief, Holly could barely see, but she noticed Charlotte’s inspirational vanity plate: **RISN4U**. As a Christian, Holly regarded Charlotte’s vanity plate as a message that Brent was at peace; that he had gone to a “better place.”

The next time that Holly was in Myrtle Beach, she went to the DMV office to try to contact the South Carolinian who had vanitized with the **RISN4U** plate; although privacy laws prevented the DMV from releasing Charlotte’s name and address, the DMV-er with whom Holly spoke forwarded