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We're tops in vanity plates

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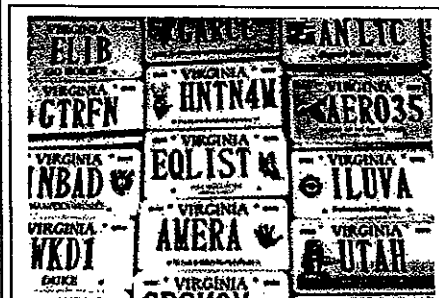


Photo By: MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH

By REX SPRINGSTON
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF
WRITER

SLIDESHOW

With the help of B DANCIN and many others, WERNO1.

Virginia has the highest percentage of personalized, or vanity, license plates in the country, a first-of-its-kind survey shows.

"Virginia is for vanity-plate lovers," said Jason King, a spokesman for the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

WHO SEZ

The survey was conducted largely by King's group, an

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association of state motor-vehicle departments.

The research showed that 16 percent of Virginia's plates bear the oft-cryptic vanity messages, followed by New Hampshire with 14 percent.

WHY VA

Virginia's love of the plates is no surprise to anyone who has spent any time on the road with RCAR, MELLO1 and PINT SZE.

But no one truly knows why Virginia stands in the vanguard of vanity.

It could be that Virginia charges only \$10 a year, one of the lowest fees in the country. But other states also offer inexpensive plates. New Mexico, for example, charges just \$17, but only 1.7 percent of its plates are personalized.

On the other hand, Illinois has a high fee - \$94 the first year, \$13 each year after that - but is third in the state rankings at 13.4 percent.

Virginia's vanity-plate sales brought in about \$9.4 million last year. The money is used to run the vanity-plate program.

1STORY

Since both her names start with "b" and she likes to be dancing, it was only natural that Blakely Booth would choose B DANCIN.

"My license plate says it all, I guess," said Booth, 24, who grew up in Prince George County and attends Virginia Commonwealth University. She has danced professionally since she was 16.

HER VU

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You could make a good guess at B DANCIN, but RUNRNME?

That would be the plate of Shelia Anderson of Richmond, who has run marathons and other races since the mid-1980s.

"No matter if I'm actively running or not, there is always a runner in me trying to get out," said Anderson, 50, a program analyst with the state Department of Criminal Justice Services.

BOOK GY

Stefan Lonce of Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y., is the author of the upcoming book "LCNS2ROM -- License to Roam: Vanity License Plates and the Stories They Tell." He calls the plates "minimalist poetry in motion."

"You can tell a story -- be it a powerful story, a personal story, a funny story -- in eight characters or less as you are driving to work in the morning. Isn't that great?"

Lonce worked with the vehicles association on the survey after he found no one knew how many vanity plates existed.

In Virginia, the plates are made by inmates at Powhatan Correctional Center. Lonce would like to see the workers turn out even more.

"I'm encouraging everyone to vanitize their cars," he said. "Let's have a little fun on the roads." Contact Rex Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

Reader Reaction:

What do you think of vanity plates? Do you have one? [Click this link to post your comment](#)

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 02:45 PM by Lamont A. Johnson
I just don't like it when the plate references the driver as being a QT (cutie), when in fact they are not. That plate could have went to someone much more deserving!

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 02:41 PM by Anonymous
"Virginia's vanity-plate sales brought in about \$9.4 million last year. The money is used to run the vanity-plate program." "In Virginia, the plates are made by inmates at Powhatan Correctional Center." These plates literally are made for pennies, how can it possibly cost \$9.4 million to operate this program? Where else are the profits going?

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 01:31 PM by unfair
The state will deny a plate with a reference to wicca, satan, devil, but I see lots of plates that say "praiz god" etc. It is very much stacked in favor of Christians and forbids mention of other religions. Very unfair and unAmerican. The religious references are very offensive and should not be allowed.

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 01:21 PM by 100Grand
I got a new car in August and have been working on a vanity plate message since that time! No winner yet! Thinking of good combinations are hard now since many choices are already taken... but I'm still working on it.

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 01:14 PM by cosmic mojo
I saw one that I thought was pretty close to x-rated. One letter was omitted, but if you read between the lines it was very disgusting sexual reference. If we have to fund our state coffers with vanity plates, let's please ban sexually explicit and religious plates that can offend Virginia citizens. There is no role for the State to be facilitating insulting and offensive communication.

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 12:51 PM by safety
I don't know why people, especially young women want everyone to know their plate number. TV shows always fade out the plate number for safety, so why would you choose something a stalker, rapist, etc. could target?

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 12:44 PM by funny
Just like the lottery is a tax on stupidity, paid vanity plates are a tax on self-obsession. Go for it, pay extra so your plate screams "look at me, look at me, look at me; I need to be validated by everyone staring at me and thinking how clever I am."

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 12:41 PM by sunshine135
Virginia has too many vanity plates. I really don't care if you think of yourself as 1BIGQT. This comes from the low price of purchase for a plate. I am by no means a big tax person, but I would love to see them increase the price of vanity plates from \$10 extra to \$100 (which is about the real going rate in states like Texas). This would cut down on the amount of nonsense vanity plates, and might raise some real dollars for VDOT. If you want to be "special", pay for it.

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 12:17 PM by Anonymous
I've had a variety of vanity plates over the years, I currently have plates that reflect my profession. Because they're the lowest plate issued in the series, it's a good conversation piece for others in my line of work. Maryland has probably about 5x the number of available vanity plates that we do. Want to see all the available plates? Go to: http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/citizen/vehicles/plate_search.asp Long live the idea of individualism in the Commonwealth!

Posted November 26, 2007 @ 11:39 AM by sexyhuh
I have had vanity plates since 1988.....I think they are entertaining and can say alot about the person and/or car....currently my license plate says "SEXY HUH", however on this particular car I have had 2 others "GOT VENM" and "HERSSSS" it is all about the Black Car the plate it on :0) In the past I have done a tribute to Dale Earnhardt TERMN8R I have acknowledge my military affiliation SSGOIF I have had sooo many over the years, I used to change them every year...I LOVE THEM!!

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