# Smartphone app by U-M students promotes good deeds

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Beautify your world. Leave an inspirational message in a public place. Connect with a family member. Those are just a few of the proposed acts of kindness pushed out to users of a new smartphone application developed by University of Michigan students.

So a user picked up litter in a fast-food restaurant parking lot. Another stuck a note to a public restroom mirror that said, "You are awesome." Others united with an estranged father or brother.

DoGood, a new, free app available to [iPhone](#) and iPod Touch users, aims to make the world a better place, its developers say.

"We simply wanted to empower the 40 million iPhone and iPod Touch users to collectively do acts of kindness," said Jason Bornhorst, a senior computer science and engineering student. "I can go smile at a stranger, but what if we could get 300,000 people to do that? … The world needs something like this."

DoGood, created by the student-run company Mobil33t, (pronounced "mobil-EET") has been downloaded more than 10,000 times since its release June 8. It has an active user base of more than 5,000, and that number is growing every day. It lets users leave stories about how they participated in that day's deed. It also integrates with [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) so participants can send a message to their friends when they've finished an act of kindness.

"There's a tweet somewhere in the world about DoGood every five to 10 minutes," Bornhorst said.

App store reviews praise the product's ability to leverage technology for altruistic purposes, and they say it helps them feel part of something bigger.

Bornhorst and his fellow developers were inspired to create DoGood during Elliot Soloway's "Mobile and Web App Programming" class, offered for the first time last semester. Soloway is an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor in Computer Science and Engineering, College of Engineering, School of Information, and School of Education.

His class was less about the nuts and bolts of programming than it was about analyzing the comings and goings of products, people, and companies in the world of mobile computing, Soloway said. Students learned iPhone and Android programming on their own, and as a final project, groups designed and built their own products. Android is Google's smartphone.

Pork Bounce, Smober, Talking Walls and Nutrition Wiz are a few of the students' ideas. Pork Bounce is a game involving a pig that jumps across bricks. Smober helps users quit smoking with a tally of cigarettes not smoked. Talking Walls creates oral histories of places by letting you leave a story and tag it with your location. Nutrition Wiz counts calories by reading the bar codes on packaged foods. Students might still submit some of these to app stores.

The proliferation of smartphones provides exciting programming opportunities for students, Soloway says.

"Students can produce software that someone can use. In the past, that was nearly impossible. The steps to get it to the end user were beyond

the student, but the app stores changed everything, and these students immediately saw that."

Across campus, they're taking advantage of the platform. Several applications created in Soloway's class went on to win the U-M Office of Technology Transfer's iPhone Challenge, held last semester as another way to encourage entrepreneurial thinking. And Andy Lin, a senior computer science and engineering student, recently submitted his Proximity Messaging System to the Apple store. It allows messaging with others in Bluetooth range, within at least 10 meters.

"There have been location-based messaging apps, but nothing targeted towards users that are within feet, rather than miles," Lin said. "Maybe this could be used to meet people at a bar. You could advertising a status message like 'buy me a drink,' and someone could actually walk over and do it. That idea is pretty out there, but the point is that there could be immediate person-to-person interaction resulting from using the app."

Soloway will teach his programming class again in the fall. Others involved with Mobil33t are: Kunal Jham, who graduated from U-M Computer Science and Engineering in April; and Mayank Garg, an art and design student.

More information: DoGood -- mobil33t.com/dogood/

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