

Brighten app does less than brighten students days

There are many forms of bullying varying from cyber, to physical, to mental. Cyber bullying, being at the top of that list, is done through texting, social media, and even apps.

Brighten is a mobile app that is supposedly "the happiest place on your phone," according to the Brighten website. The anonymous app allows users to follow friends and have them follow back. On the homepage, the people that are followed on the account are able to read comments left on other people's accounts. People with this app are able to send anonymous messages, suggested to be comments, to their friends.

Lately, though, this app has been used to do more than just "brighten someone's day," although the intention of this app, however, is meant for good.

"I think everyone kind of has an idea of what Brighten is. I don't have it, but my friends do. They have never really received or even sent, rude comment," says Josh Windsor, seventh grade.

According to Brighten's description on the app, this app was based off of a friend's story.

In 2013, a friend of Brighten's passed away in a climbing accident. After he passed, all of his friends started writing nice, heartfelt messages on the man's Facebook wall about how much he meant to them. The Brighten team wished that he could've seen all the things people were saying about him while he was alive. They decided to create an app as a way to let their friends know how much they are appreciated.

"While the initial thought behind the app, probably had good intentions, I think the reality of the app could be very harmful. A positive message sounds really appealing, but anything that is anonymous has the potential to be creepy. Because the Brighten app allows you to send messages anonymously, negative messages can also be sent," said Willow Springs counselor, Kay Bordonon.

However, customer reviews are not very 'bright' anymore. Some think that the

app is a great idea but does not produce great outcomes as expected. Many people have used this app to say things to others that would hurt them while they don't have the right or ability to say it face to face. Brighten has tried to eliminate some misuse by putting people who have used the

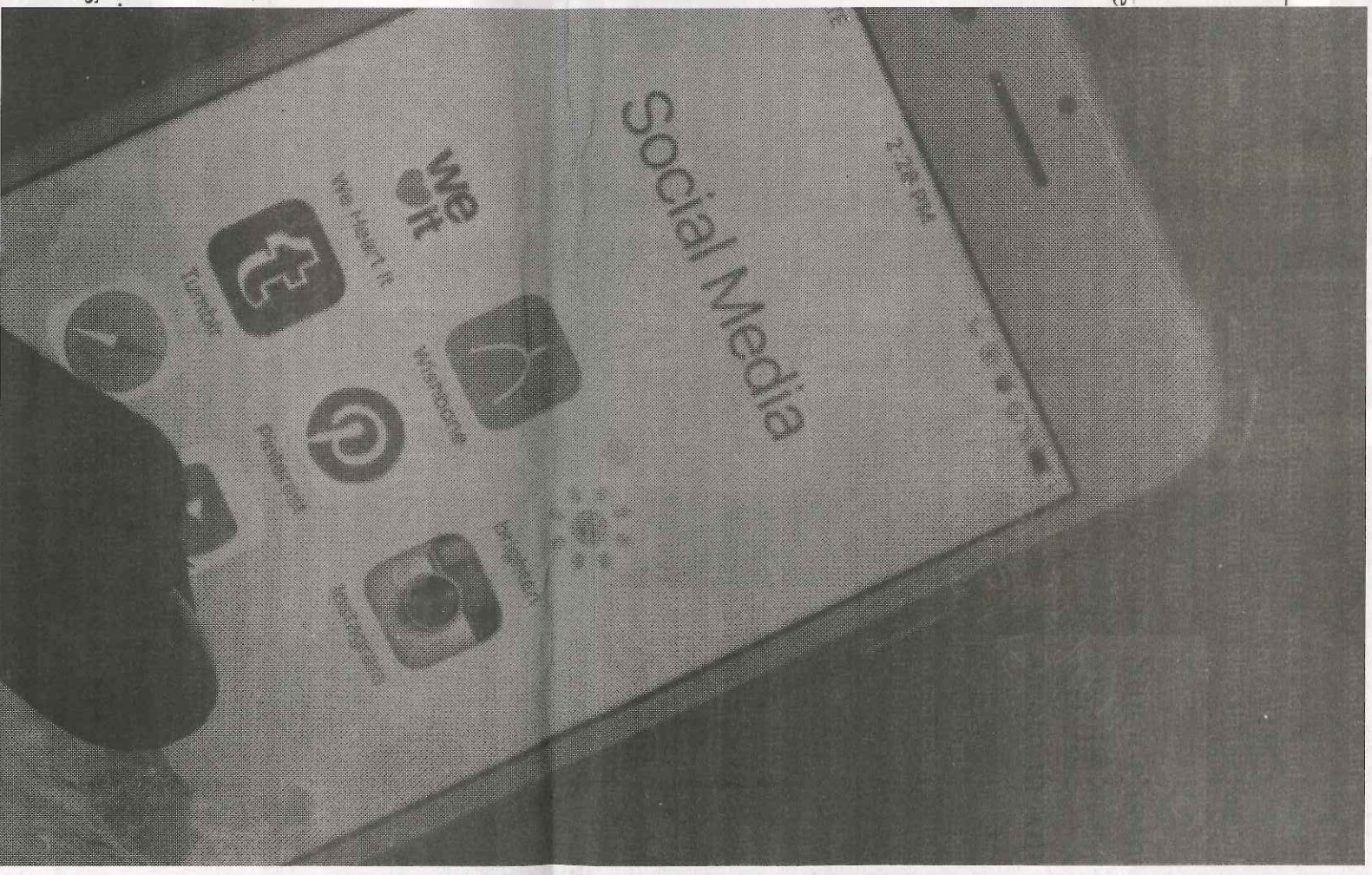
**"I have Brighten, and it's kind of inappropriate."
- Ty Hall, eighth grade**

app inappropriately in "time out" and restricting the words that are allowed, but people have found ways around it disregarding the rules and intentions.

"I have Brighten, and it's kind of inappropriate. I get mean comments all the time, and yes, you get put in 'time-out,' but that doesn't

really stop [cyber bullying from happening]. The app has a good message, but isn't really working out," said Ty Hall, eighth grade.

"Any app that allows you to send messages anonymously should be avoided, for both students and adults. If people wish to communicate through social media, there are plenty of apps and other platforms where the user is identified that can be used to convey positive messages to others. Talking face to



face works too," said Bordonon.

Brighten has gone from having the ability to 'brightening someone's day,' to 'darkening someone's week'. The creators are working to improve the app, and taking in feedback from their customers.

-Layla Healey, Staff Writer