



The Panthers for Pawsitive Peace Project

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ABSTRACT

The Panthers for Pawsitive Peace Project was born out of a shift in mindset. As conflict management specialists, Ombuds tend to see conflict first – the challenges, struggles, and problems our visitors and communities face. Inspired by scholarship on art therapy and placemaking as well as Johan Galtung’s (1969) concept of Positive Peace, which extends past the absence of war to include the harmonious integration of human society, this work represents an expansion of focus to the pursuit of Positive Peace through the promotion of a sense of belonging for all.

The implementation of welcoming, collaborative, and accessible practices to create and support resilient communities falls in line with Georgia State University’s Strategic Plan. One of the pillars of GSU’s BluePrint to 2033 is “Identity, Placemaking, and Belonging.” The vision is for GSU to be(come) a place where people want to learn, study, work, live, play, and connect. The Panthers for Pawsitive Peace Project is a participatory kindness rocks

initiative that raises awareness of the Ombuds office while bringing together the GSU community in both physical and virtual ways and spaces. People come together during drop-in hours for rock painting and in-person rock hunts. They get to keep rocks that particularly speak to them as physical artifacts and re-hide others so they can make someone else’s day. Finally, they get to share the rocks and their journeys across campus and beyond with the greater community using a hashtag and posting in a Facebook group. A note on the name “Panthers for Pawsitive Peace” – it is a playful homage to GSU’s panther mascot, Pounce.

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Panthers for Peace



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AUTHOR BIO

Birthe C. Reimers, PhD, is the 2023 recipient of the Association for Conflict Resolution's William J. Kreidler Award for Distinguished Service to Expanding Knowledge in the Field of Conflict Resolution. Birthe is an Ombuds, mediator, coach, and published conflict scholar-practitioner with 18 years of experience in the field. Her most recent article introducing the Photovoice methodology as an addition to the modern Ombuds' toolkit was published in the JIOA in 2024.

Birthe earned her PhD in International Conflict Management from Kennesaw State University in 2015 and has been an Ombuds as well as a member of the International Ombuds Association since 2016. Since January 2018, she has been directing the Office of the Ombudsperson at Georgia State University, the largest public university in Georgia. She is also a member of MWI's Outsourced Organizational Ombuds panel.

