



PHOTO BY SAMUEL HERRERA

A SPACE OF OUR OWN

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The 2018-19 school year marks Pratt's Clean Cats College Recovery Community's (CRC) second year of availability to Pratt students. For those in or pursuing recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, CRCs offer access to peer support, sober social events, accountability, and academic and mental health services, along with other opportunities to allow for a full college experience while continuing in their recovery journeys. Pratt's community, Clean Cats, also extends membership to individuals struggling from other addictive behaviors, such as eating disorders. And, for the first time, Clean Cats offers 24 hour access to a community space.

This past summer, I had a list of 'to-do's and 'to-join's for my first year at Pratt. Some items came and went, but one I remained determined to find was a community of recovery-minded individuals. Looking back on my first month and a half here, I cannot imagine my experience without Clean Cats, which I frequently use as both refuge and a quiet space outside of weekly meetings.

I talked to another member about what the experience was like last year without the physical Clean Cats site, who shared that,

"It was hard on the days [I was] feeling really low," elaborating that they had to reserve the classroom in Willoughby and pick up a key from security to get inside for meetings each week. "It never really felt like a completely safe space because. . .it wasn't ours."

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As I sit in the room now and look at the books, posters, and other markers signifying that this space is ours, I reflect on how it becomes so much more than just a place for us to meet and to share our struggles and successes.

The room becomes both a physical reminder of what we are working toward and a symbol of the many people who, though on their own paths, are also there to support us. This expands the reach of the community beyond weekly meetings and gives us more agency in our recoveries by having the freedom to come and go as we please, without restriction.