Changing lives: St Fagan's course helps Tom beat



Tilly the dog helps Tom Jenkin tackle his anxiety. But it was a National Lottery-funded lambing course which gave him the confidence to aim for a career as a vet.

“When I started high school, I was very nervous. I struggled trying to make friends.

"The anxiety that I felt made me feel quite lonely and it affected my work at the start.”

Tom, from South Wales, was finding life hard. But then his mum brought an adorable Springer Spaniel puppy home when he was in year seven at school, and he started to see a glimmer of hope.

> “My dog turned into my kind of support-giver. She really gave me courage in school and I was able to relate my feelings to my dog."

Tilly helped him to start thinking about looking for work experience.



Taking a chance

By chance, on a day out with his family to St Fagans National Museum of History near Cardiff, Tom spotted an advertisement for a one-day lambing course.

The museum of Welsh life, culture and architecture has received more than £11million from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It reopened last year after a massive redevelopment, and now offers hands-on courses, also funded by The National Lottery. In 2019 it won the Art Fund Museum of the Year award.

“I was taught on the course by Emma the shepherd, we spent the whole day together," Tom remembers.

> "It really confirmed that I really wanted to become a vet or do something with animals, so I got more confidence."

"I thought that I would need to repay my debt to the animal kingdom because Tilly’s helped me throughout my whole life, coping with my stress, so I thought the best profession to help animals would be to become a vet.”

First steps to an exciting career



He enjoyed the day so much that he was inspired to apply to go to university and set on a path towards an exciting career.

While his family are proud, he thinks his faithful friend might have different feelings about him leaving:

“I think Tilly really wants me to stay home and give her attention all day… She’s happy that I will be able to help other dogs like her, but she’s just a bit jealous.”

Watch Tom's story on The National Lottery website.