

MY DIARY A DAY WITH THE DOGS TRUST MERSEYSIDE
BY SHIRA LUMB

On 2nd April 2007 I spent a fabulous day with the Merseyside Branch of the Dogs Trust, courtesy of the Young Kennel Club and the Dogs Trust. My Mum took me to the centre, as I had to be accompanied during my visit.

I had an induction with a lady called Lynn, who was to mentor me during the day. This is where we discussed Health and Safety and break and lunchtime information, as well as telling me about all the jobs that I was going to try to tackle. I was very excited and couldn't wait to start!

Lynn took us to one of the blocks where the dogs live and we met Jenny, who is in charge of this block, and Chris, a young man on work experience, who I was going to be working with. The first job that I tried was calling in all the dogs from the outside runs into the inside kennels, so that the outside runs could be cleaned. I then tried to help with the hosing down of the outside kennels but I think I got more water over my mum than on the floor! Mum took over after that.

After that experience it was back to the kitchen where I set about washing the dogs' water bowls. I found this a lot easier for me than trying to use the hosepipe – and so did Mum! All the bowls have to be cleaned and then refilled with water. This cuts down the risk of any infections and illnesses.

This took us up to break time. We sat with all the staff and volunteers in the garden and had a nice drink. We listened to and watched the birds, which was lovely and peaceful. After a short break it was back to work and this time I was given the responsibility of walking some of the dogs. This was great as the dogs are allowed to be taken around the beautiful grassed and barked areas.

I had a lot of fun doing this and really enjoyed taking Star, a 10-year-old stray with a great temperament for a walk. I am thrilled to say that she won't be with Dogs Trust much longer as she has a new home to go to! I walked Star several times during the day and really enjoyed it. After all the exercise with the dogs it was time for lunch so we sat in the same place as before and enjoyed our lunch just listening to the birds and the dogs! The staff then gave me a choice – would I like to go and watch some clicker training being done or would I prefer to 'socialise' a puppy? Well, I think you can probably guess what I wanted to do. This adorable 10 week old Staffie pup was gorgeous and so playful. He knocked my glasses off and scratched all of my face with his tiny claws-all in the name of fun! He just wanted to play all the time, so he was trying to climb up my wheelchair to get at me. I don't think he will have to wait too long for a good home.

After walking the dogs again, my last job of the day was to help with feeding. Jenny sorted out the dry food into the bowls as she knows who has what amount and then I put the meat into the bowls and Jenny and Chris then gave the food to the dogs.

Everyone at the centre was so kind and friendly to me and I had a great day. I will be going back during school holidays as a volunteer! I appreciate all the help that I was given by all the staff at the Dogs Trust at their Head Office and most especially by everyone at the Merseyside Branch –THANK YOU!!!!

THANK YOU also to the YKC Management Team and the Shaun McAlpine Award Committee, without whom this would not have been possible.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!!!!!