

Lorna Shaw is a remarkable individual and advocate, having bettered the lives of many people over the years. She is ever-present with a loving heart to spread kindness and positivity and is ready, willing, and able to be of assistance in any matter, big or small.

Her introduction to Surrey began about 10 years ago, when she volunteered to transport locals who needed rides to participate in the programs. "I would have gone myself if I could, but I was not able to walk. I would drive people to the door and wait for them to be done, and I'd take them back home. Sometimes I had to go in the front door if they didn't come out, and that's when I first saw Surrey," said Lorna. "When I walked in, I felt it. Surrey had such a welcoming, warm atmosphere. If you didn't have to leave, you wouldn't want to. It was a world of its own, open to everybody, regardless of their beliefs. It was unbelievable."

While on crutches, Lorna volunteered to be a monitor in the exercise room and, before long, she was helping a friend make check-in calls to Surrey members who lived alone. Soon this became her permanent gig and the calls expanded to members on Christmas, who had just returned from the hospital or rehab, whose caregiver was away and even 1 a.m. calls to a woman who, like Lorna, had difficulty sleeping and appreciated the late-night companionship. "We had our best talks then," said Lorna.

Many meaningful friendships have resulted from these calls. In Lorna's world, asking "How can I help?" until she has an assignment, is a given. She is not only a supportive and compassionate ear, but she is always ready to spring into action when one of her members is experiencing a medical, personal, or home maintenance issue. She knows that with research, diligence, and communication, she will help to expedite a resolution.

She makes all this happen by phone or tablet, often with conference calls to doctors, or with technicians for a new furnace, black mold, building a ramp or anything else. The member will say, "This is Lorna, my good friend, and she's going to be listening and will be asking questions, too."

Once called Lorna's "Surrey Sisters" – a coined phrase for those in her orbit – the name was updated to "Surrey Pals" when she officially adopted Anthony Garbowski after his wife passed away. At that time, he Lorna that he had kept a diary of his wife's breast cancer journey. Lorna suggested that they co-author a unique perspective that would focus on his feelings as her husband and caregiver, and which would also serve as a guide for men helping women through chronic illness. For the next 10 years, Tony verbalized his memories and shared his emotions while Lorna recorded and later transformed them, along with her caregiving experiences, into a moving account which has since been published, titled "Don't Walk Through the Mirror." Lorna also designed the cover based on Tony's wife's poignant dream.

Four years ago, due to multiple chronic conditions, Lorna became homebound and bedbound. These challenges beg the question: "How have you been able to do it all, for so many people, year after year?" The answer, she said, is that "while my commitment is very time consuming, it's extremely invigorating. My Surrey Pals give me strength. It never fails that if I give someone a lift, I get a lift."

Lorna said her relationships with Surrey Pals have been "all-inclusive. I want each person to feel my big hug. That's what I try to do over the phone. I get big hugs back, too."