



Good mates: Marina Phillips, left, and Myrle Kahi met through Age Concern Counties Manukau's visiting service and their friendship has blossomed.

Photo: NEIL DUDDY

Weekly visit is a joy for Marina and Myrle

By Hannah Norton

Lonely silence is a familiar sound to Myrle Kahi.

The 80-year-old has lived alone in an Otahuhu home for the elderly for more than two years with only the occasional visitor.

That's despite having five sons, 19 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Then along came Marina Phillips, who'd been moved by an article on Mrs Kahi in the Manukau Courier last July.

In the article Age Concern Counties Manukau appealed for volunteers to become visitors for some of the region's isolated senior citizens, like Mrs Kahi.

"I saw it as a really important service," Ms Phillips says.

"So I felt compelled to apply. Imagine if you were on your own all day every day – it would just be so lonely."

Ms Phillips visits every week and over coffee the pair discuss everything from Mrs Kahi's past to Elvis to Shortland Street.

"Shortland Street's my favourite programme," Mrs Kahi says.

The bit of time Ms Phillips takes out of her busy schedule as an Otahuhu policewoman is the highlight of Mrs Kahi's week.

"Marina is such a wonderful friend," Mrs Kahi says.

"I'm glad she's come into my life. I see more

of Marina than I do my own family."

Ms Phillips says she's benefited from the friendship as well.

"We talk about things from how Myrle met her husband to the current news.

"It's very interesting and I've learnt a lot about history."

Ms Phillip's four-year-old daughter Electra also loves coming along occasionally to see Mrs Kahi.

"She really enjoys it."

The pair want to continue the friendship "as long as we can", Ms Phillips says.

"I'm in no hurry to go anywhere."

Phone Age Concern on 279-4331 ext 800 for more information on the visiting service.