



TEAM AWESOME: Some of the team who worked on the book are, back from left, Keshni Naidoo, Siobhan Gunning, Derryn Campbell, Tish Roux, Lisa Meyer, Dylan Dreyer. In front are Kirsty Stirton, Karen Lotter and Mabusi Kgwete. PICTURE: WARRICK SHANNON

Awesome stuff

WHEN Derryn Campbell started the Awesome SA movement in 2007 she had no idea where it was going.

"All I knew was that I could not stand by and listen to people complaining about the country, blaming all around them, without acknowledging the positive. I decided to do something to get a positive message across and get people involved," she says.

She took a leap of faith, gave up her corporate career in management and set about spreading the message. She linked up with Di Smith, who was running a similar movement in Pietermaritzburg, and established the website www.awesomesa.co.za "to share the good news out there".

Awesome SA supports and works with individuals who are making a difference. It encourages others to start initiatives that in time will change communities, and it challenges South Africans to take responsibility for their environment, their culture and their attitudes. Campbell

A Durban woman, who started a non-profit organisation to focus on the positive in our country, has published a book packed with fun facts, writes **Lindsay Ord**

hopes that the movement and website will turn negative talk into positive actions.

The website carries good news about the country, information and stories posted by people who have something positive to say. Campbell writes a newsletter that is delivered to 8 000 e-mail addresses and her latest venture is the publication of *Awesome South Africa*, a 224-page book that is just ... well ... awesome. It has been described as "the gift book with a smile".

"There are a lot of good books about South Africa that cover either its history, culture, scenery, or economics. This book is a fun celebration of South Africa," she says. "It portrays the heart of our people, our heritage and culture."

It's packed with bite sizes

pieces of information and is the kind of book you can dip into and out of at your leisure. There's info you can use: like how to say hello in all 11 languages and taxi hand signals – and fun stuff for tourists: explanations of our unique words, like jol, robots, boerewors and takkies. There's also a spread on controversy – remember Zola Budd? Hansie Cronje? Basil D'Oliviera? Sea Cottage? Hot issues of yesteryear, filed away in the memory, make for good reading.

Campbell and a team of researchers and designers worked for 18 months sourcing and compiling the information and South Africa boasts many "firsts" and "onlys".

Did you know that South Africa is the richest source of platinum, manganese,

chrome, gold and vanadium in the world? It occupies 4 percent of Africa's land mass and boasts more than 50 percent of the cars, phones, automatic bank tellers and industrial facilities on the continent. About 56 percent of South Africans are churchgoers compared with the world average of 26 percent.

It has the world's best hotel, best game reserve, favourite city, most outstanding golf destination, leading luxury train, best family beach ... and more.

What's not to love?

Of course Campbell has had her fair share of criticism for her sunny view of South Africa. "Some people say I have my head in the sand," she says, "but I urge them to take their blinkers off and see the bigger picture and wonder happening all around us. If each of us do something small, it all adds up and we can make a difference to this country."

● The book is available for R295 from good bookstores or www.awesomesa.co.za. E-mail info@awesomesa.co.za or call 082 786 8450.

