

September 2004

### **Mag sellers explore Mother City's assets**

Thebe Tourism Group's invitation to the group of vendors formed part of September's Tourism Month celebrations, a national initiative aimed at encouraging South Africans to discover their own country and its tourism assets.

"We wanted the vendors to explore Cape Town as tourists," says Itumeleng Pooe, group marketing manager of Thebe Tourism Group, which has the concession for facilities at Cape Point.

"Vendors often interact with visitors and are asked questions about the city, so we hope the tour can help them to be better ambassadors. It is also an opportunity for us to mark Tourism Month and Heritage Day by giving something back to our community."

The tour, on 22 September, took the vendors to Robben Island, Cape Point, Table Mountain via the cableway, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Constantia Vineyards and the V&A Waterfront.

Pooe believes this joint venture positions Cape Town's Big Six as "one single package, a single route which gives tourists a visual and experiential summary of the Cape's heritage and tourism wealth, from the mountain to the sea".

Annemie Liebenberg, spokesperson of V&A Waterfront commended the initiative: "Since its inception two years ago, the organisation has made great strides in marketing themselves in a creative manner that makes them accessible and affordable to locals."

"We are open to new things and fresh thinking. Most importantly, we would like to remain relevant to what is currently happening in the country by encouraging South Africans, especially Capetonians, to celebrate their own tourism assets" says Liebenberg.

The Big Issue editor, Glenda Neville, is confident that this is more than just a tour. "It presents an opportunity for our vendors to taste and see that there is more out there for them."

A non-profit organization, The Big Issue employs over 350 vendors each month, both in Cape Town and Johannesburg. It has provided social support for 8 000 people since it was established in 1996.

The Big Issue launched its first magazine on the streets of Cape Town in 1996 with four vendors. Today it has a readership of more than 55 000 and a circulation of 19 000. The magazines are sold only by The Big Issue vendors.

Critical to its job creation function is The Big Issue philosophy that actively encourages

and equips vendors to "move on" from the project into the mainstream of the economy.