

the good fight

Frith Thomas, Editor

To me, it's individuals like these who truly encapsulate the spirit of strong women, the ones who quietly get through the daily struggle of life, inspired by the dreams they have of how they are going to make tomorrow a better day – real women with roots, yet who have wings to soar.

These inspiring women are all around us in South Africa and it's to them, and in honour of Women's Day on 9 August, that we've dedicated various features in this issue. Particularly inspiring is *Nothing Holds Me Back* (pg18) – read it and know you really *can* do anything you set your mind to!



'ASK YOURSELF HOW YOU'RE HELPING OTHER WOMEN AROUND YOU'

Ballerina turned businesswoman, 39-year-old Addi Lang has combined her knowledge of performance and natural cosmetics to establish not only the Return To Roots Skincare range, but also the Return To Roots Foundation, which teaches women vital rape prevention skills.

In 1997, Addi Lang made the life-changing decision to leave the ultra-creative world of theatre and the performing arts. Aged 32, she wasn't sure where her strengths lay, or who she was as a person outside the theatre – and it was holding her back.

'My career had ended, but before

I could go forward, I had to figure out who I was as a person,' muses Addi. 'I looked at what I was capable of – I'm a trained aromatherapist and reflexologist, and I wanted to find a way to put that knowledge to use through teaching others these skills.

'In the meantime, thanks to many hours spent sewing backstage, I started teaching disadvantaged women how to do an avant-garde style of beadwork, with the vision of selling it on to the international market

– I wanted to empower the beaders by teaching them skills they could use to generate income. And with cash of their own, the women who were stuck in abusive relationships could afford to leave and make a life for themselves.

'I'm not a feminist – I believe in people liberation and women supporting women through networking. And with that in mind, my business partner Marion Gullifer and I teamed up to create Return To Roots Skincare – a range of beauty products for men and women of all skin types, and made with natural ingredients.

'The Return To Roots range is distributed through a direct selling scheme and our agents earn commission on what they sell. We provide training and set them on the path to financial empowerment by selling our products. At the same time,

we incorporate life skills and empowerment modules to enhance all their relationships.

'I met a number of like-minded, liberated men through doing this work – like trauma counsellor Aubrey Pieterse who specialises in relationship issues and rape. Together we formed the Return To Roots Foundation – a non-profit organisation we set up to educate men and women about self-respect, and other relationship issues.

'In the last three years, our focus has been on rape prevention. We were finding that most women didn't really understand what rape was and the Return To Roots Foundation is the only organisation in SA to do rape prevention courses.

'Apart from the courses, we also offer the victims post-rape trauma counselling and courtroom preparation – we make sure the woman doesn't have to go to court on her own – as well as a clean up service if the rape happened in her own home.

'I realise that one person's efforts won't change the crime statistics immediately, or the fact that, in the next ten years, one in three women will be raped in their lifetime. I've taken up a cause that no-one wants to confront or speak openly about.

'One day, everyone in SA will be affected by rape in one way or another, but my question to you is: life is short for all of us, so what are you doing to help other women while you're still here? Just by taking a stand in favour of rape prevention, you're helping millions of women in this country.'

For information and course dates, call Addi on (011) 485 5526, 082 559 6702 or e-mail addi@netactive.co.za

