



MORNING AFTER: Some of the sleepers with (back) Reece Sydenham, Tony DeFraigne, Daisy Brown, and (middle), Joel Read, Leanne Johnson, Vicki Higgins, Luke Van Vlite, Cody Sydenham, Courtney Bright, Tayla Marsh, Madison Bright, Trish Thomas, with (front) Kerri-Anne Dettman, Jacinta Marsh, Ros Laws, Nathan Kirk.

Sleep for homeless

By MICHÈLE JEDLIKA

INVERELL'S second sleep-out in Victoria Park to raise awareness about youth homelessness drew a stronger crowd this year. Co-organiser Pathfinders Specialist Homelessness Services manager Trish Thomas said 40 people turned up Wednesday evening with tents, swags and bedding for the night under the stars. She said it was a great event.

"We had about 25 young people with us, and everyone slept out," Trish said.

Games and fun activities passed the time, and a blow-up screen turned the park into a cinema. They watched Yogi Bear, The Hobbit and The Green Lantern.

"It was like the old drive-in. We had

popcorn we had lots of lovely cakes, and food and do you know, everyone just had a lovely time," Trish said.

"They had fun and they just all snuggled down for the night.

She said they were grateful for donations from Brumby's Jobs Australia, Australia Post.

"Linking Together and Pathfinders and Rural Outreach all provided the sausages, and the (Macintyre) Lions Club came down and cooked us breakfast this morning," Trish added.

She said it was lovely to get up from your swag for a hot cooked breakfast but said this is not the life of the homeless. The message for the night was not lost on the participants. Nathan Kirk is 14, and felt the discomfort of sleeping the night out in a box.

"It's not my bed, or lounge chair. Uncomfortable," he said.

Trish said the night-time chill that settled on the park made an impression.

"About 11 o'clock it got really cold and everybody got extra blankets and as we were going around trying to get people warm, cardboard raised the awareness," she said.

Motum's Furniture had donated several large cardboard crates many young people slept in for the night, and everybody learned the thermal power of cardboard.

"And we talked about the homeless are quite resilient and clever, because they use cardboard to keep them warm. And that's the one thing that kept the cold out," Trish said.