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Helping hand for young homeless

WIGNALL Ford chief executive Andrew Cross had to do something to arrest the damage being done to his vehicles at his car yards and by his own admission he took it to another level.

Perplexed at the damage – often by people breaking into cars to seek shelter from the cold – he says he had to “understand it” to address it.

Mr Cross says other government services and programs are “missing the pointy bit” in terms of directly helping people in Frankston.

The Frankston businessman got 150 fellow traders together to pitch the idea of hiring two outreach workers to help raise the expectations of the city’s home-

less and destitute youth. Mr Cross formed the Peninsula Community Ownership Foundation in conjunction with Open Family Australia and the partners are about to roll out a program on the streets of Frankston.

After three business gatherings they have raised the \$180,000 required to fund two workers for 12 months who will try to address the growing problem of homelessness in Frankston.

Open Family says there are about 60 young people sleeping rough each night in Frankston.

“Yes, we have taken it into our own hands,” Mr Cross said.

“I don’t think people understand what

is actually going on in our backyard, on our streets.”

At Mornington racecourse a fortnight ago, the foundation guests heard from Open Family outreach worker Byron Wilson who gave them a snapshot of the problem.

Other speakers included AFL greats Kevin Sheedy and Stan Alves.

Open Family chief executive Sue Renkin said the program was similar to one in Werribee and that there was a need for a service that actively sought out and supported at-risk youth in Frankston.

For more information, call Open Family on 1300 669 600. **Jason Gillick**