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Green Force takes out asphalt 'prison'

Schoolyard gets a TV makeover

By BRIAN GRAY, TORONTO SUN

Grass stains will take the place of scraped knees at a Toronto Catholic school with the help of a little television magic.

A backhoe started removing 30,000 square feet of asphalt that covered the play area at St. Charles elementary school, a project spearheaded by the people behind a new HGTV show called Green Force.

"Our schoolyard is a prison," parent Julie Girardi said about the old asphalt. "Our institutions have a better playground area than our school."

The asphalt jungle had hopscotch markings but not a blade of grass or a tree for shade in the summer.

In winter, there was black ice, and basketball hoops for younger kids were too high, principal Joe Bellissimo said.

ON SHOW NEXT YEAR

In the next two weeks, volunteers will lay sod, plant trees, replace basketball nets and put in a playground for the kindergarten kids.

Next year, it will be on Green Force, said Shaam Makan, vice-president of Tricon Films and Television, the company behind the HGTV show.

"We are really excited about this project," Makan said. "We get a chance to give back to areas of the community that have given so much to the rest of us."

It's the first of 13 episodes to be taped, with others featuring places like Casey House, a Toronto hospice for people with HIV/AIDS, Makan said.

Experts from Jordan Designs, Con-Drain, Earthco and Beaver Valley Stone have volunteered their services.

"It would have taken five years for the city to do what will be done in two weeks," area Councillor Howard Moscoe said. "Two years to get the money in budget and another three years to get all the permits."