

BUSY BEES: Ayvran Mackie, Teina Snowden, Manaaki Jakobs Te Paa and Annaleah Cassidy-Taylor Against the odds, four young Kiwi girls have out-smarted some of the world's top problem solvers. Oturu School placed second in the community section at the International Future Problem Solving Finals in the United States. Just getting to the finals proved a battle for the girls from Kaitaia. After qualifying for the world champs, the girls spent months raising money and canvassing big businesses to fund the \$30,000 cost. The hard work paid off with the girls beating some of the world's top 15 teams - including Australia, Britain and Singapore - with their plan to save the honey bee.

Principal Fraser Smith said the students had no idea what to expect from the competition.

"They are kids from a decile one school who have never been on a plane before."

Ayvran Mackie, Teina Snowden, Manaaki Jakobs TePaa and Annaleah Cassidy-Taylor were beaten by a school from Texas. Deputy principal Heather Greaves, who travelled with the students, said the judges were impressed by the students' ambitious plan to save the honey bee.

In the US, beekeepers reported losses of up to 90%, prompting fears of crop shortages. In New Zealand, beekeepers have reported bee losses of up to 30% in some places. Honey bees are the planet's most effective pollinators.

To combat the problem in Kaitaia the students researched bees, created brochures and planted trees to attract honey bees back.

Taking these ideas to America proved tiring work.

"Every time they touched a plane seat they slept because of the early morning, late nights and intensive work," Greaves said.

And the hard work has not stopped, with the students being hired for their first job after a visit to the New Zealand Embassy in the US.

New Zealand Ambassador Mike Moore hired the girls to transform his Matauri Bay garden into a bee-friendly paradise by planting trees attractive to bees.

Jerry