

PRINT-OSF kicks off STEAM November with activities at Peoria Children's Museum

National STEAM Day is November 8 but OSF HealthCare is kicking off an entire month of STEAM-related activities, starting with an opportunity for kids from kindergarten and up to experience new STEAM activities at [Peoria Playhouse Children's Museum](#).

The goal of the [OSF STEAM](#) program is to inspire and encourage children to envision themselves having a career in medicine by engaging in activities involving science, technology, engineering, art and math. Shannon Egli (pronounced EGG-lee), STEAM educator and director of the Anatomy Lab at [Jump Trading Simulation & Education Center](#), says the new activities are to stimulate excitement about learning more.

"I think by them coming and playing with these things, it might introduce them to the health care field and maybe it'll interest them in doing more STEAM things like what we offer at Jump or at OSF where they can come in and dissect a shark, they can dissect a squid or build a heart pump that's just like a functioning heart pump that's inside a person and they can just keep going with it." Egli explains, "This is really just an introduction to the health care field through a sense of play, but they get that extra knowledge at the same time." (:28)

There are a handful of interactive STEAM activities added to the usual line-up at the children's museum in Peoria. Egli says anything that's slimy or offers a unique tactile experience goes over well.

"We have squishy organs where they can lay on the ground, trace their body and then put the squishy organs where they think they're supposed to go on their own body, so they get a chance to understand where parts of their body are on this piece of paper. It's really cool because they like to squish a heart or liver or lungs and really get to play with it and get involved."

Egli took his own children Maxwell, age 7, Eleanor, age 5, and two-and-a-half-year-old Winston to test out a few of the activities before they debuted. Eleanor showed off her knowledge as she made her way through some of the organs.

"The brain is squishy, and this is where you put it," she explained while putting the pink brain on top of her head. "It has some grit on it, and you pop it like this," Eleanor demonstrates while squeezing and twisting the brain, "And its white stuff. And these are the lungs," as she holds them to her chest and then pushes them out and in towards her to represent breathing. "And this is the heart," Eleanor declares while placing it near the center of her chest.

Her younger brother Winston also liked the brain and was able to show it belongs in his head.

OSF Innovation Labs coordinator Katie Smith says kids can dive into hands-on learning by exploring bone structures. They also look at a paper skeleton as they put together a vertical magnetic skeleton puzzle with parts created by engineers at Jump using molds and 3D printing. Smith says it's designed to show how bones connect to support the body.

"It will show the skeleton so kids can see what the skeleton is supposed to look like, because it can be a little bit complicated. It also talks about how buildings and skeletons are similar so the scaffolding in a building is similar to the skeleton in a human."

This week, in addition to the activities at the Peoria Playhouse, OSF STEAM brought hands-on engineering and anatomy activities to some patient learners at OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois, sparking curiosity and wonder in health careers. Several other activities are planned throughout the month in collaboration with community organizations to expand the reach of STEAM activities that leverage the power of play.