Imagine walking through the valves of a gigantic heart, exploring the canals of the ear, handling actual lungs, or brushing enormous teeth with a giant toothbrush.

St. Peter’s Health Partners and News Channel 13 hosted their annual Journey Through the Body on March 28 through March 29 at Colonie Center Mall.

Journey Through the Body provides people of all ages the opportunity to explore huge, realistic models of the human body. It also enables participants to engage in health related activities and learn how the body works.

Kevin Mangan, an audiologist at St. Peter’s Hospital, has been participating in Journey Through the Body for approximately 12 years. Mangan educated attendees as they visited the ear canal, experiencing how sounds affect the ear.

“Exploring their biology with this approach reaches these kids at their own level,” Mangan said.

The benefit of this exhibition is that it provides children with a hands-on experience versus learning about the body through cartoons, according to Mangan.

Mangan said, “The goal of this event is to educate the public, provide information and answer questions.”

Children explored the inflated model of the ear and were able to experience how sound affects it through light display.

Various models of the body were dispersed throughout the mall, leading people on a journey of discovery.

A giant heart was filled with children traveling through the various ventricles, and learning about the risks of developing heart disease.

At the dental station children learned how to properly brush a gigantic replica of teeth after learning about the amount of sugar in foods.
Children were also able to see how many germs were on their hands after putting them under a black light.

One young boy, after seeing how many germs were on his hands, ran to his mother exclaiming, “Oh, gross! Cool!”

Fred Palmateer, a nursing student from Samaritan Hospital, volunteered for Journey Through the Body at the lung station along with other student volunteers. The station compared actual healthy human lungs to unhealthy smoker’s lungs.

“Children get a hands-on experience touching and feeling the lungs; it’s very effective,” said Palmateer.

Children were either intrigued or repelled by the ability to touch a real human lung, with comments such as, “awesome”, “so cool” and, “so gross!”

One mother of two brought her children to Journey Through the Body for the first time, intrigued to come after seeing the commercial.

“I really enjoy it; it’s very hands-on and interactive. It gets my kids very excited,” she said.

The mother, who asked not to be identified, said Journey Through the Body will have her kids talking for days, admitting the exhibits have a very big impact on them.

As the mother observed her two children participating in the activities she commented that if her kids weren’t interested in science before, they are now.

The mother thought St. Peters did a great job with the event and was so impressed she said she is planning on coming back next year.