

Adoptive mom exports care to China's orphans

Regina Palumbo adopted a daughter and in the process changed thousands of lives.

Palumbo welcomed daughter Alison home 10 years ago from an orphanage in Nanjing, China. Palumbo also read about — and saw — the substandard medical care many Chinese orphans received in those facilities.

“Being grateful for my daughter, I decided it would be a good thing to form an organization to help take care of some of the orphans who needed medical care,” she said.

Palumbo formed the Children of China Pediatrics Foundation in 1999.

Ten years later the foundation — which recruits teams of doctors, nurses and other health professionals to travel to China to provide free medical care to orphans — estimates more than 2,000 children have benefitted from the service.

Dr. David Roye, the foundation's medical director and chief of pediatric orthopaedic surgery at New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, said the teams treat a variety of ailments.

“We do approximately 50 cases a year in the mission,” Roye said. “And unfortunately, see a lot of children we can't help. Sometimes it's the condition of the disease — these are children we could not help here.”

The foundation works with the Chinese government, usually setting up in hospitals with much if not all of the equipment needed to do the sometimes complicated surgeries the young patients require.

Members also train Chinese physicians and other local health professionals in many procedures, Roye said. The group has also paid to bring Chinese physicians here for more training at New York Pres-

byterian-Columbia Medical Center.

“We try to leverage our trips,” Roye said. “Providing medical care is a very important part of what we do, but we also understand that we're just doing a little bit. We need to leave the Chinese physicians and nurses and administrators with some way of continuing the work.”

For the past several years the foundation team, usually between 20 to 25 people with six or seven surgeons, a like number of anesthetists, five or six nurses, several pediatricians and a few non-medical volunteers, has worked out of the Fourth Affiliated Hospital of the Nanching University.

Patients are selected by the government, Palumbo said. Many have to travel long distances for treatment.

Yet the need is so

great that just getting there does not guarantee a child can or will be treated.

“We need to do cases where we can really make a big impact in the child's quality of life with one procedure, without a whole lot of need for followup,” Roye said.

Roye, who began volunteer work abroad shortly after joining Columbia Presbyterian in 1980, said he does it because “I love the work. It has been and continues to be a great experience.”

Roye recently received the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation at New York Presbyterian.

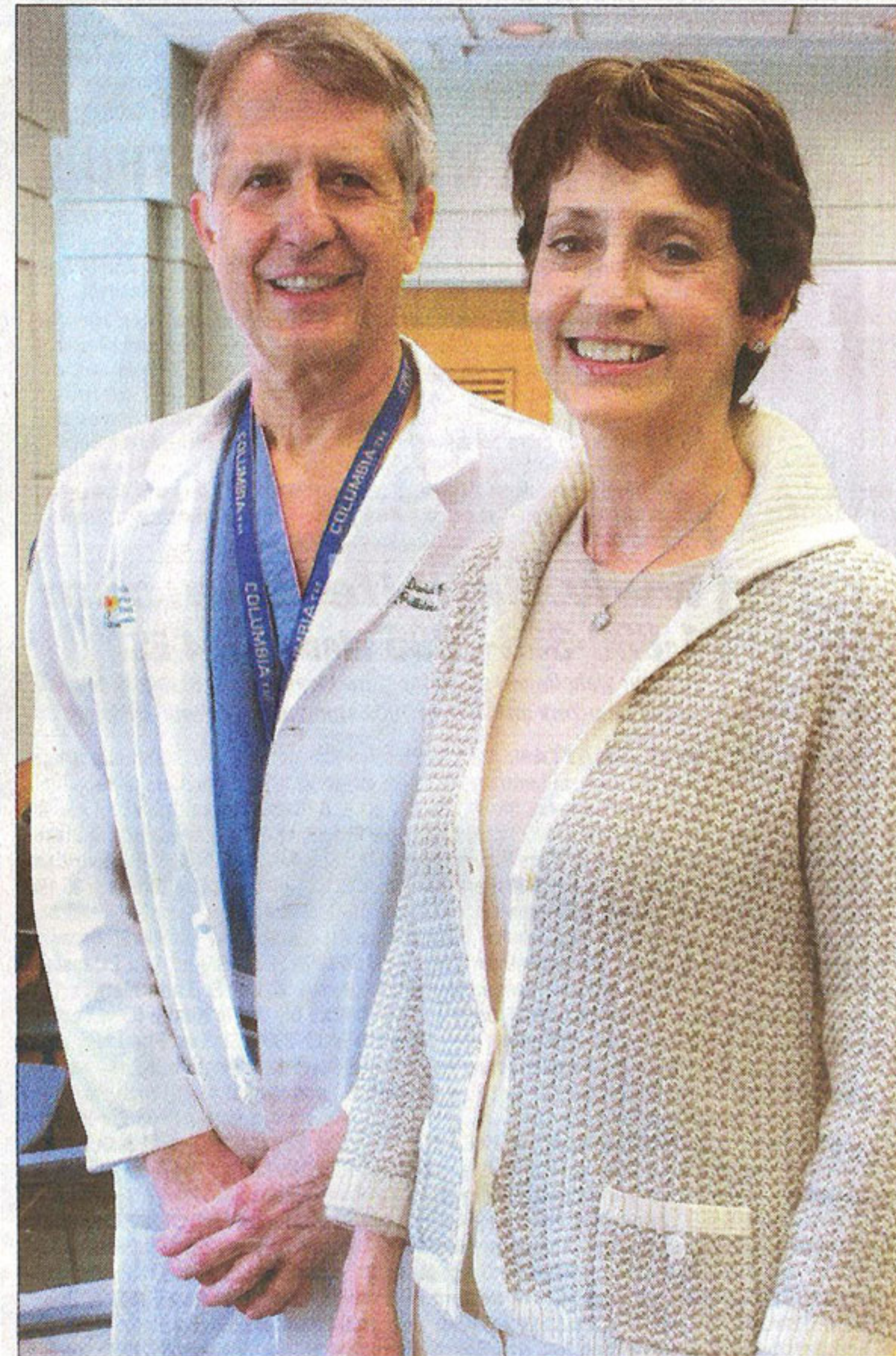
The foundation will hold its “Change A Life: 2009 Bike/Hike” fund-raiser Sunday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Ross Dock Pavilion, Palisades Interstate Park, at the foot of the New Jersey side of the George Washington Bridge, rain or shine.

Admission is \$25 per person.

To register or to find out more about the group, visit www.chinapediatrics.org, or call (212) 248-1561.

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CITY BEAT
BY CLEM RICHARDSON



David Roye (l.), head of pediatric surgery at New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, teams with Regina Palumbo, executive director of Children of China Pediatrics Foundation, which provides health care to orphans in China. Photo by Jeanne Noonan