Ground level: Supervisor walks from Woodbridge to Haymarket

It's one thing to hop in the car and drive from, say, Woodbridge to Manassas, comfortably sealed behind closed windows with the radio playing and air-conditioning humming. It's another thing altogether to get of that vehicle and walk -- from one end of Prince William County to the other.

So when Supervisor Pete Candland, R-Gainesville, first proposed the idea of walking the entire length of the county to raise money for local charities a few weeks ago, his wife Robyn was skeptical.

"When he brought it up I thought, 'Do you really know how far that is?'" Robyn Candland said with a laugh outside the McCoart Administration Building Monday morning, the first stop on her husband's more than 30-mile Memorial Day trek from the Hilda M. Barg Homeless Prevention Center in Woodbridge to downtown Haymarket. "I started getting nervous the last couple of weeks, for him."

She wasn't the only one. As Candland proceeded along what ended up being a 33-mile hike across the county, he, too, wondered if he'd finish his inaugural "Walk for Prince William" in the allotted 12 hours he and his staff planned for the event.

In the end, he came very close.

Accompanied by Prince William police Officer Greg Pass -- who joined the walk in honor of his fallen friend and colleague Officer Chris Yung -- Candland, 38, reached the Haymarket Town Center just 30 minutes past his scheduled 6 p.m. arrival time. He was met with the cheers and applause of about 50 supporters, including Robyn and the couple's four children, ages 13, 10, 6, and 3.

Candland's goal for the event was to raise $30,000 -- $1,000 for every mile walked -- to split among the Barg homeless prevention center and six other nonprofits, including ACTS, SERVE, the Youth Apostles Don Bosco Center, Azalea Charlies, the Chris Yung Memorial Fund and an ongoing effort to build and furnish a home in Haymarket for Marine Lance Cpl. Nick Thom, who lost both his legs and three fingers in Afghanistan in 2010.

By Monday afternoon, the walk had already raised at least $20,000, thanks in part to an anonymous $10,000 donation. Another $2,000 was pledged by the Church of Latter Day Saints Candland's family attends in Gainesville.

Additional pledges are expected, and Walk for Prince William's donation and Facebook pages will remain open.
More about dollars in ways supervisors could use to their political advantage. Candland said the practice suggested political favoritism and was inappropriate because it directed county tax office funds to local nonprofits.

Successful effort last year to end a long-standing practice that allowed elected county officials to donate leftover funds to support Candland's ongoing community-service efforts. Candland said those efforts stem, in part, from his service as president of Rise Up Prince William.

Landry, president of Rise Up Prince William, and Pass approached the car, which came to a bumpy stop on the road's shoulder.

Along the way, Candland, Pass and May (who tagged along for the first seven miles) dodged roadkill that included a deer and a raccoon, endured the nearly incessant high-pitched whir of chirping cicadas and stopped briefly to offer help to a man whose right-rear tire went flat near where they were walking on Prince William Parkway.

“I thought it was very appropriate, on Memorial Day, to stop by and talk to them,” Candland said.