

**John Pickens**  
**Executive Director, VeteransPlus and Yellow Ribbon Network**

With a 50-year record of serving military veterans, John Pickens is Executive Director of [VeteransPlus](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit financial literacy organization established to provide financial solutions for veterans, active military and their families.

John served as a U.S. Army combat medic from 1970 to 1973 before transitioning to the Bay Pines Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital in 1974. He also enrolled at the University of South Florida in 1974, where John helped establish a student-veteran organization prior to his graduation in 1979. In 1994, he was appointed as Special Assistant to the Director and Public Affairs Officer for the Lake City VA Medical Center. In 1998, John was selected as the Public Affairs Officer for the newly formed North Florida/South Georgia VA Health System.

John was appointed as the VA Network Communications Manager for VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN8) in 2004. There, he worked with congressional offices throughout Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean to establish congressional forums and veteran advisory boards that would allow veterans and their families to meet face-to-face with VA leadership and their congressional representatives to address veteran issues and concerns.

John retired from federal service on Jan. 31, 2010. The following day, he became Executive Director of VeteransPlus, with headquarters in Clearwater, Fla., where under his leadership, VeteransPlus obtained major grants to provide financial education and counseling services to veterans, active military and their families. In 2011, VeteransPlus launched [Yellow Ribbon Network](#) (YRN), where veterans, active military and their families can connect and receive assistance from numerous partner nonprofits and the American public through [a single online platform](#). The result is a streamlined process that efficiently connects people with specific programs to meet their individual needs.