



**501<sup>VADER'S FIST</sup>ST LEGION**  
P R E S S K I T





# GREETINGS

Thank you for your interest in the 501st Legion, the world's definitive Imperial costuming group!

Since 1997, the 501st Legion has been dedicated to re-creating film-quality costumes of the “villainous” characters of the *Star Wars* galaxy and entertaining *Star Wars* fans with our public appearances. Over the past fifteen years, the 501st has become a leading force in fan-based charity events around the world. Members of the Legion have heightened awareness at promotional events, helped to raise millions of dollars for charity, and spread the magic of *Star Wars* to fans of all ages.

The 501st Legion, sometimes called by its nickname “Vader’s Fist,” is made up entirely of volunteers, and each of our members has spent months and sometimes even years researching and constructing their costumes. With approximately 10,000 approved members worldwide, our costumes include just about every “bad guy” in the *Star Wars* galaxy... Sith Lords like Darth Vader and Darth Maul; nefarious bounty hunters like Boba Fett and Greedo; hostile aliens like Tusken Raiders and Gamorrean Guards; and of course, the soldiers of the evil Galactic Empire: Clone Troopers, Sandtroopers, TIE Fighter Pilots, Biker Scouts, and the ever-popular, nameless, faceless Stormtroopers that are a universal symbol of Imperial might!

There is nothing quite like a group of Stormtroopers to bring attention to an event. Unlike individual entertainers, the 501st Legion functions as a group, creating a true science-fiction/fantasy ambience with a wide range of professional-grade costumes and props. Our internal membership standards ensure a high level of professionalism in both appearance and actions to ensure that events run smoothly. Having participated in events around the world for fifteen years, the 501st name alone has been known to boost attendance and media attention.

This Press Kit should give you a good idea about who we are and what we do. We hope and that you find it both entertaining and educational. If you have any questions that are unanswered by the pages that follow, you can always send an email to [info@501st.com](mailto:info@501st.com), which connects you to our world-wide Legion Command Staff. Thank you again for reading, and may the Force be with you!

Duty! Honor! Empire!

— The 501st Legion Public Relations Officers

# TROOPERS OF THE 501<sup>ST</sup>

While our costumes may be what our fans come out to see, it is the tireless dedication of time, money, and enthusiasm from our membership that really makes the 501st Legion what it is today. The Legion is a 100% volunteer organization. None of us are paid employees, and as a rule, we do not make any personal profit from our appearances.

Members of the 501st come from all races and creeds, and all walks of life. By day, we are teachers, policemen, librarians, truck drivers, nurses, mechanics, tech specialists, military officers, husbands, wives, mothers, and fathers. But we are all unified by a love of *Star Wars* and a desire to bring a smile to children of all ages around the world.

The Legion currently boasts more than 6,000 active members worldwide, with more than 9,700 approved costumes among them. The Legion is active on six continents, with Garrisons and Outposts in almost 50 countries around the globe.



## “Who is This? What’s Your Operating Number?”

You might hear members of the 501st referring to themselves by an odd letter-number combination, like TK-899, BH-2257, or TB-101.

Every member of the Legion is issued an identification number upon joining. It becomes their number for life, and will never be given to anyone else, even after they die. Because of that, many members pick a number that has a significant meaning to them.

Each group of costumes in the Legion carries a specific letter designation. For example, “TK” is the costume code for an Imperial Stormtrooper (taken from the line in *Star Wars*, “TK-421, why aren’t you at your post?”).

The costume code combined with a member’s identification number creates a unique in-universe designation for each of our members and each one of their costumes. Member 8968 might be known as TK-8968, IG-8968, or TB-8968, depending on whether he is wearing a Stormtrooper, Imperial Gunner, or Biker Scout costume at the time.

Considering that most people do not like being labeled or classified, proudly referring to oneself by a number is an admittedly odd practice. But being assigned your 501st Legion I.D. number is actually something of a rite of passage. When a member gets his or her number, they have officially become a part of our worldwide family.

# ORIGINS

In 1997, Albin Johnson set up a humble Geocities website called “Detention Block 2551” as a place to post photos of himself and his friend Tom Crews in their Stormtrooper armor. Within weeks of launching the site, Albin was fielding email requests from people across the country and around the world looking to be featured on the website in their own stormtrooper armor.

## **The 501st Legion in the *Star Wars* Universe**

Legion Founder Albin Johnson (TK-210) chose the club’s name in 1997 to represent our fictional unit of Imperial Stormtroopers. He wanted to ground the group in a “realistic” world and to pay homage to the fighting units of true military heroes, like his World War II airman father.

In 2004, noted author Timothy Zahn, with Lucasfilm’s approval, honored our group by incorporating the 501st Legion Elite Stormtrooper unit into his *Star Wars* novel *Survivor’s Quest*. Several other authors have since followed suit and solidified the Legion’s name in the official *Star Wars* universe.

In 2005, *Vader’s Fist* finally hit “mainstream” *Star Wars* canon with its inclusion in the novelization of *Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*. Later that same year, the Legion’s in-universe history took center stage as the plot of the *Star Wars: Battlefront II* video game.

When the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* cartoon film was released in 2008, the 501st Legion was given a popular character to lead them into battle: the clone Captain Rex.

The 501st name continues to appear in all manner of *Star Wars* material today.

What he started soon blossomed into a worldwide phenomenon – a fan-based costuming club unlike any other. The Legion ranks swelled, and regional subdivisions called Garrisons, Squads, and Outposts were created to facilitate the organization of events and appearances on a local level. While the early events trooped by the Legion were mostly science-fiction and comic book conventions or related to the release of the *Star Wars* movies in theaters and on video, members were looking for more frequent reasons to meet up with their newfound Legion friends and show off their costumes together. The Legion then became a force for good, expanding into a charitable organization that has been likened to a Shriners or Lions Club for a modern generation.



A decade after Albin founded the Legion, on January 1st, 2007, two hundred members of the Fighting 501st marched in the annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, with George Lucas himself as the Grand Marshal. At this watershed moment for the club, Lucas and Johnson discussed the future of the rapidly-growing Legion, and an unofficial partnership was born. Lucasfilm would grant the Legion a limited use of their copyrighted characters, as long as members of the 501st promised never to use their costumes for personal profit.

Since then, the Legion’s numbers have grown by thousands, and the 501st has gained renown as one of the most respected and professional costuming organizations in the world.

# OUR MISSION

The Legion is an all-volunteer organization formed for the express purpose of bringing together costume enthusiasts from around the world under a collective identity within which to operate. The Legion seeks **to promote interest in *Star Wars*** through the building and wearing of quality costumes, **to facilitate the use of these costumes** for *Star Wars*-related events, and **to contribute to the local community** through costumed charity and volunteer work



## **To Promote Interest in *Star Wars***

While a growing number of people are experiencing a reawakening of their *Star Wars* fandom, new generations are seeking ways to celebrate their passion for George Lucas's modern mythology. The 501st Legion brings these fans together, reinforcing the enduring longevity of the *Star Wars* saga.

## **To Facilitate the Use of Costumes**

Some fans are content to collect action figures...other fans want to *be* action figures. Nothing professes your passion quite like building your own detailed costume replica of a classic *Star Wars* villain, and there's nothing quite like the feeling that comes from bringing the characters of *Star Wars* into the real world and sharing that magic with others.

## **To Contribute to the Local Community**

While our organization was founded to simply provide a collective identity for costuming fans with similar interests, the 501st Legion is proud to put its resources to good use through fundraising, charity work, and volunteerism.

## **Requesting an Appearance**

Enlisting the services of the Empire's Finest is as easy as going to our website at [www.501st.com](http://www.501st.com) and clicking the link to "Request an Appearance!" There, you will need to fill out a simple request form that is automatically routed to the Garrison or Outpost that serves your part of the world.

Remember that all of our members are unpaid volunteers, with all of the everyday demands of normal adult life, so we cannot fulfill every event request that is made. Rest assured, however, that we always do our best to attend every event that we can.

To help the 501st make it to your event, try to give us as much advance notice as possible. Balancing obligations to work and family with the time we spend trooping is not always easy, so we need to plan ahead.

Please also keep in mind that our uniforms are expensive pieces of equipment. Each uniform required hours of work to construct and cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. If your event will have children present, please make sure that they do not "play rough" with or hit our volunteers. Damaged costume pieces are often difficult and costly to replace.

The 501st Legion never accepts payment for an appearance, but we do gladly accept donations to charity made in our name. A secure place to change and store our gear, water, and other provisions are also greatly appreciated.

# BAD GUYS WHO DO GOOD!

Giving back to the community is one of the 501st Legion's highest priorities. We regularly participate in events to raise awareness of charitable causes, from walk-a-thons to blood drives.

For public and private gatherings, the Legion never charges a fee for an appearance, but we do enthusiastically welcome donations made to an event host's favorite charity in the name of the 501st Legion or the local Legion unit. If an event host does not have a charity of choice, our members can gladly provide a suggestion, perhaps tied to a fundraising effort that is currently underway. In cases where the event host is itself a charitable organization, our reward is knowing that we have directly helped a worthy cause, and a donation is almost never accepted.

In 2011, the members of the 501st raised more than \$270,000 in direct charitable donations. The Legion also participated in events that helped raise an astounding \$11.6 million worldwide.



# THE HEART OF THE EMPIRE

*Star Wars* fans come in every shape and size, but the saga will always spark the imagination of children the most. And none need their spirits lifted more than those undergoing serious medical treatment. When the Legion is invited to appear at a pediatric ward, we have the power to brighten the lives of kids who are going through these difficult trials. Our characters create memories that the children will carry with them long after they have beaten their ailments.

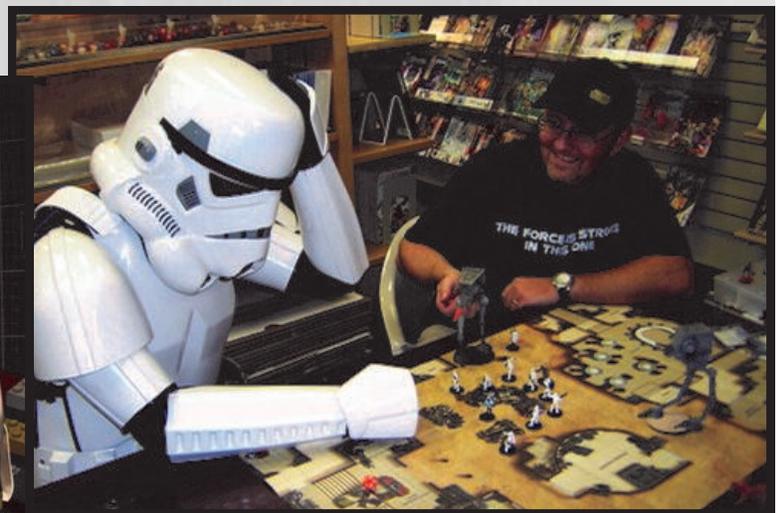
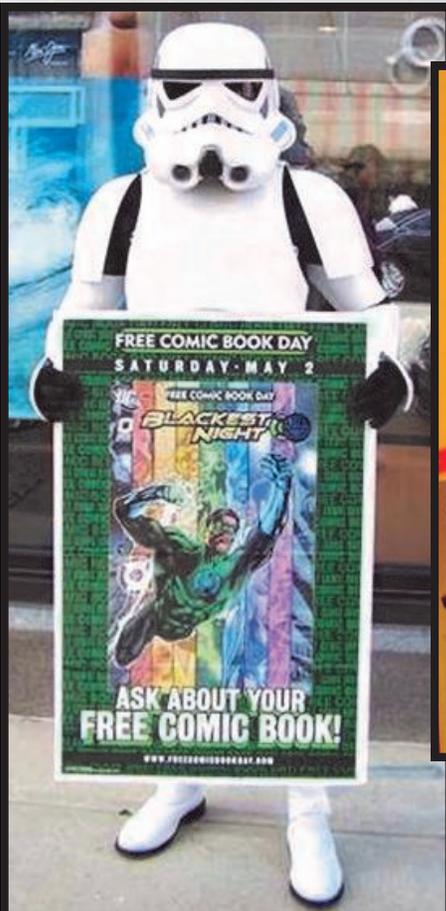
The 501st Legion has also been instrumental in granting the wishes of several Make-A-Wish children over the years. These occasions serve as a powerful reminder of the difference that we can make in the lives of young people, providing some joy and comfort to sick children and to their families during very dark times.

Members of the Legion have many reasons why we troop, but for many, this is *THE* reason.



# PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Although the 501st is not sponsored by Lucasfilm Ltd., LFL and its partners often call upon members of the Legion to help promote new *Star Wars* products and tie-ins. For fans of the saga, being able to meet characters that have stepped off of the screen and into the store can add an unparalleled element of excitement to a new merchandise release! Businesses that wish to enlist the Legion's help, including LFL licensees and partners, should first email Lucasfilm at [fanevents@starwars.com](mailto:fanevents@starwars.com) to get approval for their ideas and guidance on how to work with the 501st Legion. We all want your event to be a success!



# PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

The 501st Legion has partnered with many minor and major league sports franchises in recent years for special “*Star Wars* Nights.” These events often bring record attendance numbers to games, as families come out to support their favorite local teams and to celebrate their love for the adventures from a galaxy far, far away. Members of the 501st Legion have participated in games with Minor League and NHL hockey, Minor League and MLB baseball, NCAA and NBA basketball, and arena and NFL football!



## Imperials in the Outfield

Our members are eager to help make these events memorable for the fans in just about any way that team managers can imagine. Here are a few examples of what we have done in the past:

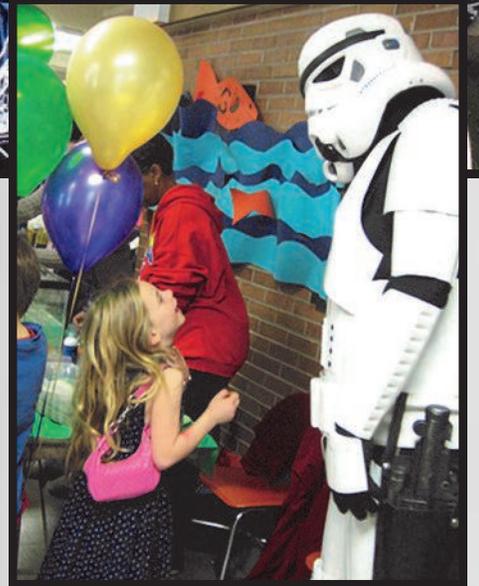
- Leading a parade of costumed fans before the game
- Throwing out the first pitch
- Mascot races
- Dancing on the dugout
- Broom ball between hockey periods
- Hosting *Star Wars* trivia, "Talk like Yoda," or "Roar like a Wookiee" contests between innings, quarters, or periods
- Photos and autographs on the concourse
- Singing at the seventh-inning stretch
- Honor guard for post-game fireworks set to *Star Wars* music
- Charitable silent auctions for special *Star Wars*-themed team jerseys

Our members can work with your publicity and special events managers to see what fits your venue best!



# COMMUNITY EVENTS

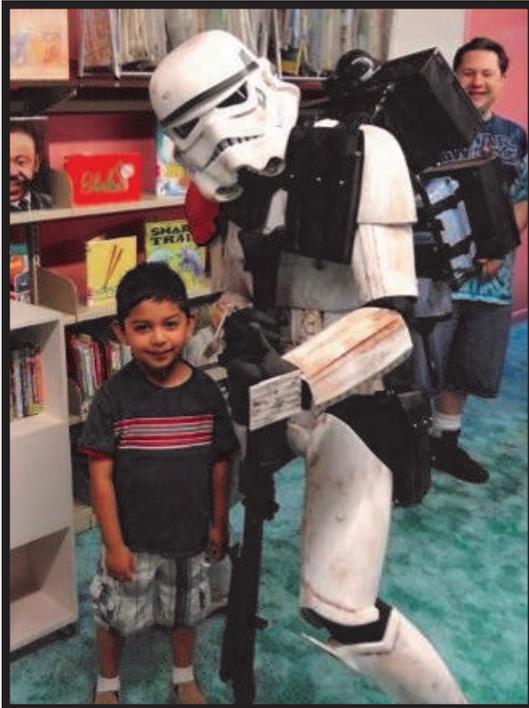
At parades, school fairs, and community festivals, when the men and women of the Legion come out in force, it is always a big hit with the public. Our members marching in Imperial formation are regularly cited by children as their favorite part of a parade, and since the popularity of *Star Wars* bridges all generations and demographics, any family-friendly festival can gain a boost from an appearance by the 501st!



# LIBRARY EVENTS

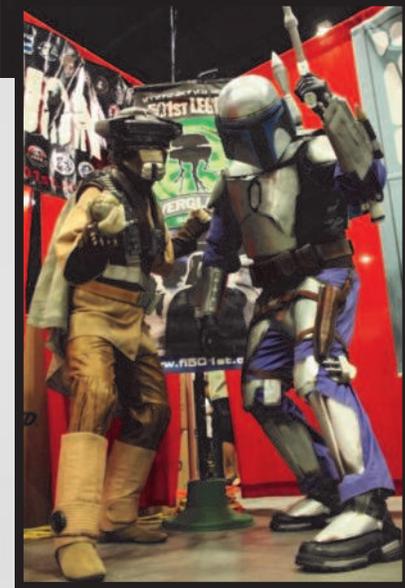
While *Star Wars* is most well-known from its films, in the more than 35 years since its release, literally thousands of books, novels, and graphic novels have been released featuring the characters created by George Lucas' saga. As a result, most community libraries have a wealth of *Star Wars* materials, and children's interest in *Star Wars* can provide an easy gateway to spark their interest in books. The 501st has been called in to support many *Star Wars* events at public libraries, aimed at bringing young fans of the galaxy far, far away into the fantastic world of reading.

"*Star Wars* days" are routinely amongst the most popular events on a library's calendar. Activities like Stormtrooper Story Time, Jedi training courses, trivia contests, coloring and drawing activity stations, and author appearances can all make your event more successful. And of course no *Star Wars* day is complete without the characters of the 501st Legion!

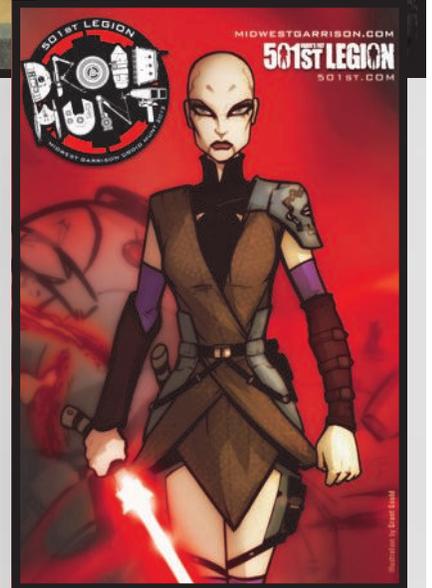


# CONVENTIONS

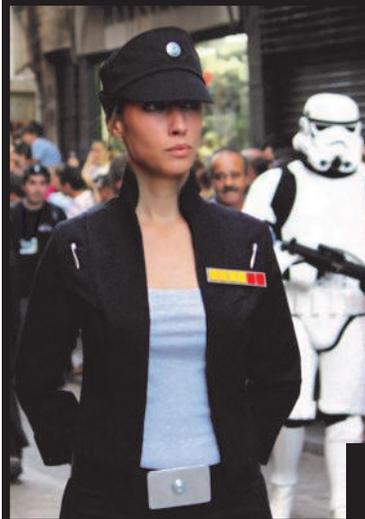
Perhaps more than any other event, units of the 501st Legion come out in full force for sci-fi and comic conventions. These gatherings allow us to show off our costuming handiwork and provide photo opportunities for a multitude of fans. Whenever possible, we gladly accept donated booth space and can conduct Q&A panel presentations to spread the word of who we are and what we do for the community. We also bring fun and games with us to entertain the crowds.



Two of the most popular activities that the Legion can run at a convention are Shoot-A-Trooper and the 501st Droid Hunt. In the Shoot-A-Trooper game, fans fire foam darts at Imperial characters to raise money for charity. The Droid Hunt is a creative give-away game, that encourages interaction with our characters, ending with a drawing for dozens of prizes from sponsors like Sideshow Collectibles, DK Publishing, Del Rey Publishers, Hasbro, Hallmark, Acme Archives, Dark Horse Comics, Sandtroopers.com, and many other *Star Wars* merchandise partners. Both activities can add value, fun, and excitement to any convention!



# FOR THE EMPIRE!



People from all walks of life all over the world have come together to build the 501st Legion into the force for good that it is today. If you think you have what it takes to join Vader's Fist, visit [www.501st.com](http://www.501st.com). There, you can find your local 501st unit, explore the Legion Detachments for each costume, and take your first step into a larger world.

A galaxy of possibilities await, and the Dark Side beckons!

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
THE 501ST LEGION,  
PLEASE CONTACT US  
THROUGH OUR WEBSITE AT  
[WWW.501ST.COM](http://WWW.501ST.COM)



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