



# Matthew Alan Gissen

JUL 11, 1940 - APR 7, 2024



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# Matthew Alan Gissen

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A “pillar in our community”, “an innovator” and “a brilliant man” are just some adjectives most would use to describe Matthew Gissen, although he was known by many as Matt or Matty. He was also known as a man of many interests, talents and great curiosity who turned his intellect and capabilities to many pursuits. Most importantly, Mathew Gissen’s highest priority after his family was cofounding The Village and helping the drug/alcohol recovery community in Miami, FL spanning over 50 years.

Surrounded by his family, Matthew Gissen of Miami, passed peacefully at his home Sunday, April 7, 2024 at the age of 83. Matthew is predeceased by brother, Bernard Gissen and sister, Rochelle Krause.

He was born in the Bronx, New York on July 11, 1940. Matthew grew up with humble beginnings. He put himself through college, law school and numerous levels of higher education. He had what we call “GRIT”, perseverance, and determination when he put his mind to something, he made it happen. He moved to Miami Beach, FL as a teenager where he attended Miami Beach Senior High (class of 1958); graduated from University of Miami with a degree in accounting and later graduated from UM School of Law and practicing law from 1965 until his illness in the fall of 2023.

Having endured many medical challenges during his lifetime, he never allowed these obstacles to curtail how he wanted to live his life. One of his greatest pleasures was traveling the world with his wife Valera. Matthew’s son Seth purchased season tickets for Matthew so he could fascinate over his Miami Heat as well as a University of Miami Football/Basketball games.

As a person of many talents and a driving curiosity coupled with ambition to succeed at many pursuits, Matt founded and worked as a businessman/lawyer in varied businesses in Miami and internationally including Rainbow Aluminum; Stanley Matthew Hair Salons; JW Cooper Western



## Obituary

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Wear. In the early 70's, Matthew discovered his real love was helping people with substance use disorders. He pioneered treatment in the Substance Use Disorder field. Concept House was the first not for profit Substance Use Treatment Center in the State of Florida, started by Matthew and Helene Goldfarb. Additionally, Concept Health, which treats women and provides adolescent prevention services in Miami, continues to thrive. He was also the co-founder of The Village South, which was located on Biscayne Boulevard in Miami. This flourishing center was well known throughout Florida and was often named as a model of innovation in drug treatment in the United States.

Matt leaves a legacy as a fearless fighter for a needy community meeting opposition along the way and succeeding at saving and helping many people who can attest to his

lifelong dedication and caring willingness to help others. Although he faced many personal health challenges, he forever pays tribute to his friend, Ed McGowan who, in 2010, gave Matthew a kidney which miraculously added 14 years to his wonderful and fulfilling life.

A loving Father and Husband, Matthew is survived by his wife, Valera Jackson Gissen of Miami, a son, Seth Gissen and daughter Alana (Staci) Gissen both of Miami. Matthew also enjoyed numerous nephews and a niece. In addition, he is also survived by three step-children, Kristen Cirillo and James Jackson of Wellington, Florida, and Tara White of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Matthew leaves behind four step-grandchildren, Eden and Layni Cirillo of Wellington, Florida, and Dakota Rose and Steele Dream of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The family requests donations be made in memory of Matthew Gissen to Beauty of Sight, A Lions Eye Bank, <https://beautyofsight.org>.

A Chapel Service will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 11:30 a.m. at Levitt-Weinstein Blasberg-Rubin-Zilbert Memorial Chapel, 18840 West Dixie Highway, North Miami Beach, Florida 33180 (305) 932-2700.




# Events


**Matthew Alan Gissen**

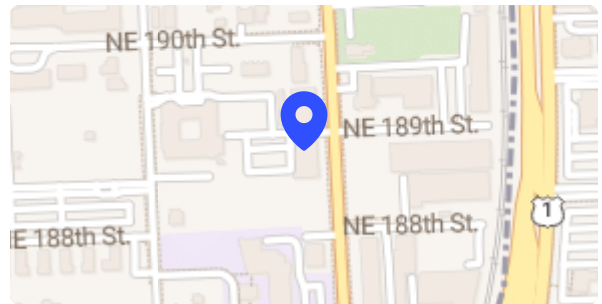
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## Chapel Service


 **Wednesday**, April 10, 2024

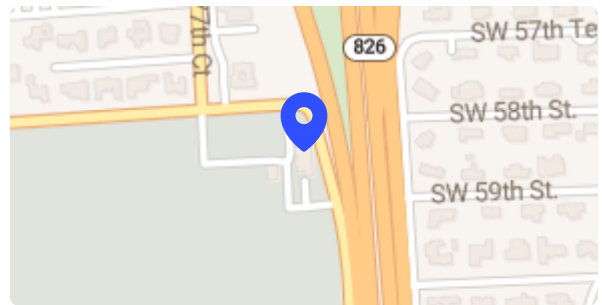
 11:30 AM ET

 **Levitt-Weinstein Blasberg, Rubin-Zilbert Memorial Chapels**  
18840 W. Dixie Highway, North Miami Beach FL 33180



## Cemetery Details

 **Mount Nebo Kendall Memorial Gardens**  
5900 SW 77th Avenue, Miami FL 33143





# Tribute Wall

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**Richard Freer** posted:

As Counselors with the State Of FL Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, my wife and I have fond memories of how Matt Gissen helped so many clients. Richard and Roberta Freer

May 22 at 5:41 AM



**Nancy Grizzle** posted:

Condolences to Valera Jackson Gissen, Seth Gissen and Alana Gissen on the passing of Matthew Gissen their beloved husband and father! May he rest in peace! Nancy Grizzle

April 25 at 11:10 AM



**Richard Berger** posted:

I was privileged to know Matt as a wonderful friend and long time patient. Through many harrowing medical issues he always maintained a smile, optimism and dignity. Our visits together, mostly medical, always deviated to warm mutual respect. Laughs and warm. "Take care of yourself and i will see you soon. "My deepest sympathies to his most loving and beautiful family. He will be greatly missed by many. Richie B

April 11 at 1:48 PM



**Eileen Beitler Scharfman** posted:

We are so sorry we cannot attend. Matthew was Robert's " father"! He saved his life, and was always there for him. We are so saddened, cannot even put into words. Love to the family, love, Eileen and Robert Scharfman

April 9 at 2:00 PM



**Barbara Litman** posted:

sending our heartfelt condolences to Matt's family... May his memory be a blessing.

April 9 at 1:42 PM



**Robert Maskal** August 30 at 6:10 AM

My condolences I met Matt many years ago at the Village South very smart man, good basketball player as well.



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Matthew by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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