On a brilliant autumn day not long ago, Pomona Hallenbeck stared out the windows of the Ghost Ranch van that was carrying her and her art students north to Los Ojos and Tierra Amarilla for a day of watercolor.

“See that?” she said, pointing to a cluster of small white crosses beside the towering red cliffs along the highway. “That is a grotto. Locals have been stopping by and leaving gifts there for many years.”

Further north, she told her students about a small church the van passed. Her students listened intently, thirsting to learn not only about art and northern New Mexico, but about Pomona Hallenbeck, too.

Hallenbeck’s enthusiasm and desire to share her artistic gifts defy her 83 years. She has been teaching watercolor at Ghost Ranch for nearly 30 years and spends four months in residence there each summer. At home the rest of the year near Austin, Tex., she is active in illustration, textile design, paper-making and hand book binding. She paints every day.

“I believe involvement with art should be in partnership with the quest for spiritual understanding. I must create, share, and hopefully insure that myself and others will continue to unlock our potential for perceiving, experiencing and expressing beauty,” she says.

Born in Roswell, N.M., Hallenbeck earned a B.F.A. at Eastern New Mexico University, then spent 10 heady, exciting years in New York City. She lived in SoHo and Greenwich Village and other places as she studied art at the Parson School of Design, the New York School of Visual Art and the Pan Am School of Art. She then returned to New Mexico.

This year, Hallenbeck taught 10 classes at Ghost Ranch from July through October. Classes ranged from Georgia O’Keeffe landscapes to Southwestern churches to the simple beauty of villages in northern New Mexico. Pomona’s classrooms explode with color and vibrancy as students of all ages and experience paint and play and perfect.

On the first day of class, she teaches essential lessons in color and guides each student in developing a tiny portable palette of watercolors that they carry as they head out to paint. The students in the van heading to Los Ojos a few weeks ago had palettes with them, too.

“Look at that house,” Hallenbeck told the students as the van crept into Los Ojos. She pointed to the picture possibilities here: the aging Spanish colonial homes, the old Catholic church, brilliant cottonwoods as gold as new pennies, the distant Brazos Cliffs, and grazing horses. She then turned the students loose for 90 minutes with sketchbooks, pencils and paint. “Be back at noon,” she said.

At noon, one class member, a hesitant grandmother who had not painted since childhood, returned with a sketch of a tiny Los Ojos art gallery. “This is beautiful,” Hallenbeck said, her blue eyes sparkling. “See? You can paint.”

Back at the ranch the next day, one student frowned as she perused her painting of the ranch’s landmark Chimney Rock. Hallenbeck stepped in and gently suggested a stroke of color here and a different shade there. She believes in guiding and mentoring and encouraging, pulling in not only the visual beauty around her but also spiritual understanding of the landscape.

A mother and grandmother, Hallenbeck has exhibited in galleries in five states. This fall, she exhibited in Roswell and, as always, taught at the Art School at Laguna Gloria in Austin. She’s already planning her 2016 classes at Ghost Ranch, “God willing,” she smiles.