

Not long ago, I was working speed on a freeway when a car went by me at a speed faster than the posted limit and got my attention. Activated my lights, pulled the car over, and upon contacting the driver, became suspicious that she was possibly under the influence of alcohol. I remember she was very emotional when I expressed to her that I could smell the odor of alcohol and asked how much she had been drinking. I ended up arresting her for DUI and processing her that evening. She started crying; she was willing to do the voluntary field sobriety tests and preliminary breath test, and upon that, I determined that she wasn't safe to be driving.

We went through the process, and I think one of the things I remind myself about a lot when we're stopping someone and arresting them for a DUI is that we're actually intervening in something potentially worse that could happen: a collision, someone's life lost, their life lost. It's not about speeding. Speeding leads to those things, but intercepting a DUI or someone who's speeding or – it's preventing something worse from happening.

Now, fast forward several weeks later, I go to work and check my box to start my shift, and there was a card in there. It was handwritten. It was from this person I had arrested several weeks prior, and essentially, the card said that she had hit rock bottom and she was so grateful for my intervention in her life that night, and it was really a turning point for her.

And that just really reaffirmed in me that I was where I was supposed to be and that this is the job I'm supposed to be doing and that we do make a difference when we're out there. The fact that she was grateful that I intervened in a not good situation – no one wakes up or heads out thinking, "I want to get arrested today," but the fact that she was grateful and was willing to express that, that really touched me. And then the other thing that I recall that jumped out was she – believe she used the words "positive influence," and regardless of who I come in contact with, whether it's a DUI or a disabled vehicle on the side of the road, or I'm responding to someone who's just been in a collision and it's the worst moment they've experienced, I wanna leave them feeling safe and that we're protecting them and that we're working hard for them. And through her experience being arrested – again, not something most people wanna have happen in their lifetime, but through that, I think she was left with an impact of, "It's not too late. There's hope and I can do something about it now."

I'm Trooper Kiesha Conan with the Washington State Patrol.